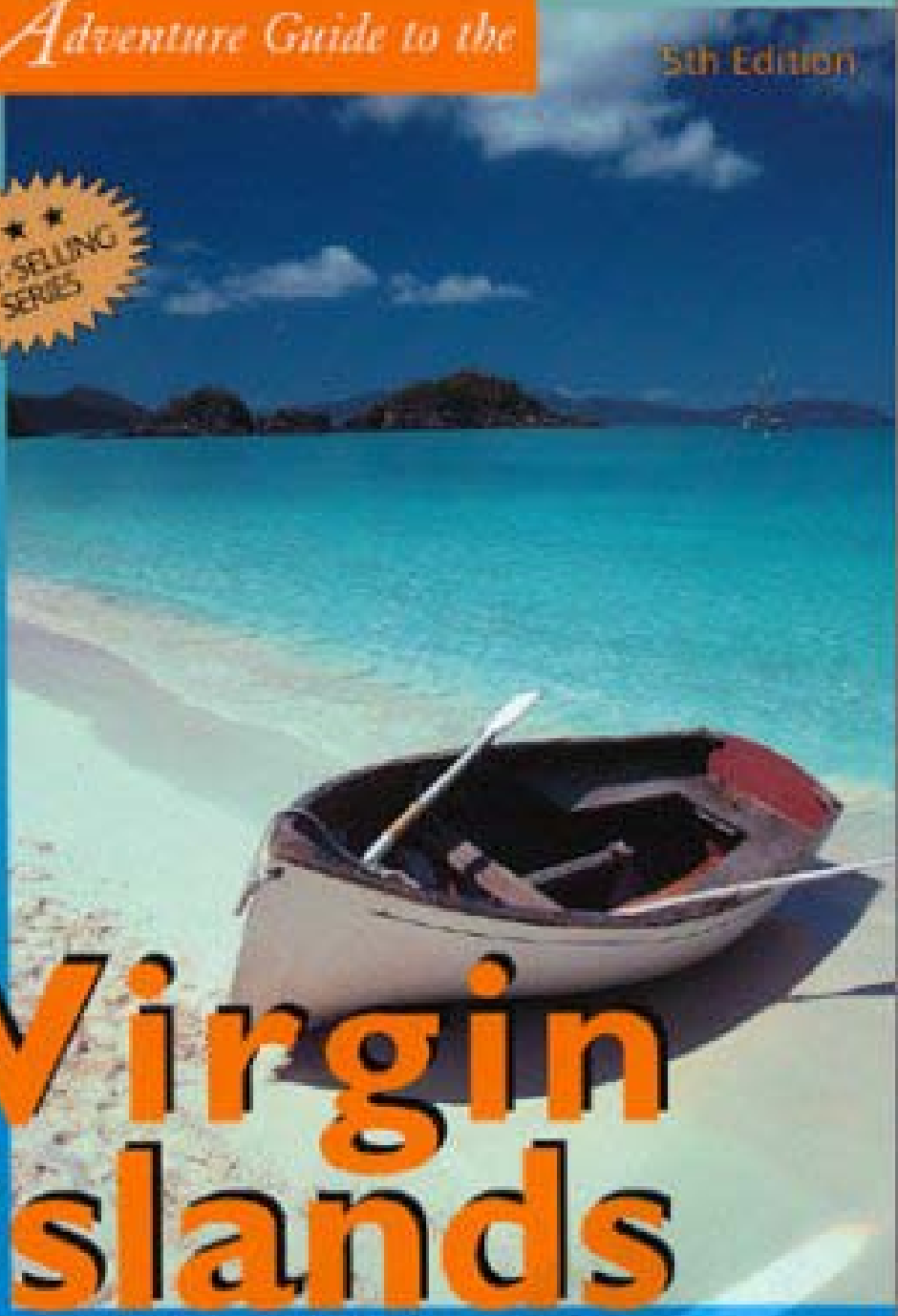
HUNTER TRAVEL GUIDES

Adventure Guide to the

5th Edition

BEST-SELLING SERIES



Virgin Islands

Lynne M Sullivan

VISIT…

Adventure Guide™ *to the*

Virgin Islands

5th Edition

Lynne Sullivan

HUNTER

HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC,
130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818
732-225-1900; 800-255-0343; fax 732-417-1744
hunterp@bellsouth.net

Ulysses Travel Publications
4176 Saint-Denis, Montréal, Québec
Canada H2W 2M5
514-843-9882, ext. 2232; fax 514-843-9448

Windsor Books
The Boundary, Wheatley Road, Garsington
Oxford, OX44 9EJ England
01865-361122; fax 01865-361133

ISBN 1-55650-907-3

© 2001 Lynne M. Sullivan

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher. Brief extracts to be included in reviews or articles are permitted.

This guide focuses on recreational activities. As all such activities contain elements of risk, the publisher, author, affiliated individuals and companies disclaim any responsibility for any injury, harm, or illness that may occur to anyone through, or by use of, the information in this book. Every effort was made to insure the accuracy of information in this book, but the publisher and author do not assume, and hereby disclaim, liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors, omissions, misleading information or potential travel problems caused by this guide, even if such errors or omissions are a result of negligence, accident or any other cause.

Cover photo by Jim Raycroft, Index Stock Photo
Index by Nancy Wolff
Cartoons by Joe Kohl
Interior photos: Unless indicated otherwise, photos are provided by the author.

Maps by Kim André & Lissa K. Dailey, © 2001 Hunter Publishing, Inc.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the relevant copyright, designs and patents acts, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publisher. eBooks Corporation

About the Author

Since I live in Dallas, on the flat, landlocked plains of North Texas, I take every opportunity to travel to places with water, sand, mountains and trees. Now, after several years as a staff and freelance writer for general-interest newspapers and magazines, I'm able to devote all my time to writing about the places I visit.

Adventure is my favorite subject, and my goal is to give readers something extra to make a destination real and exciting. I'm an avid walker, hiker and backroad biker who always wants to see what's around the next corner and over one more hill. Beaches, forests and mountaintops draw my attention, and I never keep a remote discovery secret. As a certified SCUBA diver, I often opt for destinations that offer underwater excursions and sign on for trips to the best sites with a variety of guides.

Since shopping is a favorite activity of many travelers, I spend days hunting for one-of-a-kind treasures and outstanding bargains in artists' studios, craft workshops and unique stores. I tour all the attractions and evaluate the museums, peek into off-limits studios behind dusty windows, follow the locals to out-of-the-way sites, eat in comfy family-run joints as well as the best restaurants, inspect quaint little inns as well upscale resorts, and stay out late to hit the trendiest nightspots.

In the end, I've discovered the best places to shop, visit, eat, sleep and hang out on a stingy budget as well as on unlimited funds. I've seen sites and visited places that aren't usually mentioned in travel guides and talked to experts and average citizens who know the destinations well. Then, I write it all down for you.

Travel guides are ever-evolving projects, and I welcome your comments and suggestions. Updated information appears regularly on my Website, www.travelynne.com, where you can also ask me questions by e-mail.

www.hunterpublishing.com

Hunter's full range of guides to all corners of the globe is featured on our exciting website. You'll find guidebooks to suit every type of traveler, no matter what their budget, lifestyle, or idea of fun.

Adventure Guides – There are now over 40 titles in this series, covering destinations from Costa Rica and the Yucatán to Tampa Bay & Florida's West Coast, New Hampshire and the Alaska Highway. Complete information on what to do, as well as where to stay and eat, *Adventure Guides* are tailor-made for the active traveler, with a focus on hiking, biking, canoeing, horseback riding, trekking, skiing, watersports, and all other kinds of fun.

Alive Guides – This ever-popular line of books takes a unique look at the best each destination offers: fine dining, jazz clubs, first-class class hotels and resorts. In-margin icons direct the reader at a glance. Top sellers include: *The Cayman Islands, St. Martin & St. Barts,* and *Aruba, Bonaire & Curaçao.*

Our ***Rivages Hotels of Character & Charm*** books are top sellers, with titles covering France, Spain, Italy, Paris and Portugal. Originating in Paris, they set the standard for excellence with their fabulous color photos, superb maps and candid descriptions of the most remarkable hotels of Europe.

Our ***Romantic Weekends*** guidebooks provide a series of escapes for couples of all ages and lifestyles. Unlike most"romantic" travel books, ours cover more than charming hotels and delightful restaurants, with a host of activities that you and your partner will remember forever.

One-of-a-Kind travel books available from Hunter include *Best Dives of the Western Hemisphere; The Jewish Travel Guide; Golf Resorts; Cruising Alaska* and many more.

Contents

About the Author iii
Maps xi

The Islands 1
A Dozen Reasons To Visit 2
A Capsule History 2
The First Inhabitants 2
The Age of Piracy 4
Pirates of the Caribbean 5
Plantations & Colonies 6
Emancipation & Citizenship 7
Government & Economy 7
Land & Sea 8
Geography 8
USVI 10
BVI 10
Climate 12
Flora & Fauna 13
Wildlife 13
Marine Life 14
Birdlife 16
Plants 17
Coral Reefs 18

Travel Information 21
When To Go 21
Island Celebrations 21
Travel Documents 24
Passports & Paperwork 24
Customs & Duty-Free 25
Allowances 25
Getting There 26
By Air 26
Package Deals 27
By Sea 28
Island Hopping 30
Getting Around 31
By Car 31
Island Driving Signals 32
By Taxi 32
By Bus 33

Accommodations 33
Dining 34
Money Matters 35
Time 35
Taxes 35

The US Virgin Islands 37
St. Thomas 39
Overview 39
A Brief History 39
The Great Free Port 40
Getting There 41
By Air 41
By Seaplane & Hydrofoil 41
By Cruise Ship 42
Getting Around 43
By Car 43
By Taxi 44
By Bus 46
By Ferry 46
Touring the Island 48
Guided Tours 48
Self-Guided Tours 48
A Walking Tour of Charlotte Amalie 48
Water Island & Hassel Island 55
Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook 56
Red Hook to Magens Bay 58
Above Magens Bay 60
Adventures on Water 61
Best Beaches 61
Submarine Tour 64
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling 65
Dive Operators 67
Snuba 69
Boating & Sailing 69
Cruise Operators 70
Boat Charters 73
Fishing 74
Angling Operators 75
Kayaking 76
Surfing & Windsurfing 77
Parasailing 77
Adventures on Foot 78
Hiking 78
Tennis 78

Golf . . . 79
Adventures on Horseback . . . 80
Adventures on Wheels . . . 81
Mountain Biking . . . 81
Adventures in the Air . . . 81
Flightseeing . . . 81
Shopping . . . 82
Charlotte Amalie . . . 82
Around the Island . . . 87
Red Hook . . . 88
Unusual Artwork Off The Beaten Track . . . 89
Where to Stay . . . 90
Rental Agencies . . . 90
Charlotte Amalie & Vicinity . . . 91
East End . . . 94
Where to Eat . . . 96
Charlotte Amalie . . . 97
Frenchtown . . . 98
Red Hook . . . 99
Around the Island . . . 101
Nightlife . . . 102
Island Facts & Numbers . . . 103
St. John . . . 105
Overview . . . 105
A Brief History . . . 106
Slavery . . . 106
The Rockefeller Legacy . . . 107
Getting There . . . 107
By Ferry . . . 107
From St. Thomas . . . 107
From the BVI . . . 108
Getting Around . . . 108
By Car . . . 108
By Bus . . . 109
By Taxi . . . 109
Touring the Island . . . 110
Guided Tours . . . 110
Independent Four-Wheel Drive Tour . . . 110
Adventures on Water . . . 115
Best Beaches . . . 115
North Shore Beaches . . . 116
South Shore Beaches . . . 118
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling . . . 120
Dive Operators . . . 121
Underwater Tours . . . 122

Snuba . . . 122
Boating & Sailing . . . 122
Scheduled Cruises . . . 123
Charter Boats . . . 124
Fishing . . . 124
Fishing Operators . . . 124
Parasailing, Windsurfing & Kayaking . . . 125
Adventures on Foot . . . 126
Hiking . . . 126
Tennis . . . 130
Adventures on Horseback . . . 131
Shopping . . . 131
Cruz Bay . . . 131
Mongoose Junction . . . 133
Wharfside Village . . . 134
Elsewhere in Cruz Bay . . . 135
Coral Bay Area . . . 136
Where to Stay . . . 137
Rental Agencies . . . 137
Prices . . . 137
Resorts . . . 138
Campgrounds . . . 142
Where to Eat . . . 144
Prices . . . 145
Cruz Bay . . . 145
East End . . . 149
Nightlife . . . 150
Cruz Bay . . . 150
Coral Bay . . . 151
Island Facts & Numbers . . . 151
St. Croix . . . 154
Overview . . . 154
A Brief History . . . 154
Seven Flags Over St. Croix . . . 155
Getting There . . . 156
By Air . . . 156
By Seaplane & Hydrofoil . . . 157
Getting Around . . . 157
By Car . . . 157
By Taxi . . . 158
By Bus . . . 159
Touring the Island . . . 159
Guided Tours . . . 159
Self-Guided Tours . . . 160
A Walking Tour of Christiansted . . . 160

A Walking Tour of Frederiksted 164
The Western Countryside by Car 167
Driving East & West from Christiansted 172
A Day on Buck Island 174
Day-Trip Operators 177
Adventures on Water 178
Best Beaches 178
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling 180
Dive Operators 182
Boating & Sailing 184
Scheduled Cruises 185
Fishing 186
Kayaking 187
Surfing, Windsurfing, Parasailing & Other Watersports . 188
Adventures on Foot 188
Hiking 188
Rain Forest Treks 189
Tennis 191
Golf 191
Adventures on Horseback 192
Adventures on Wheels 193
Mountain Biking 193
Adventures in the Air 193
Shopping 194
Christiansted 194
Frederiksted 196
Around the Island 197
Where to Stay 197
Rental Agencies 198
In & Near Christiansted 199
East End 201
North Shore 204
West End 206
Where to Eat 207
In & Near Christiansted 207
East End 209
North Shore & West End 210
Nightlife 212
Island Facts & Numbers 212

■ **The British Virgin Islands** 215
Tortola 217
Overview 217
A Brief History 217
Infamous Pirates of the Caribbean 217

The First Settlements . . . 219
The 1900s . . . 219
Getting There . . . 220
By Air . . . 220
By Ferry . . . 221
Getting Around . . . 221
By Car . . . 221
By Taxi . . . 222
By Ferry . . . 223
Touring the Island . . . 224
Guided Tours . . . 224
Independent Island Tour . . . 225
Adventures on Water . . . 229
Best Beaches . . . 229
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling . . . 230
Dive Operators . . . 235
Boating & Sailing . . . 236
Sailing Schools . . . 237
Scheduled Cruises . . . 237
Crewed & Bareboat Charters . . . 239
Water Taxis & Small Boat Rentals . . . 240
Fishing . . . 241
Kayaking, Windsurfing, Parasailing & Other Watersports 241
Adventures on Foot . . . 242
Hiking . . . 242
Tennis . . . 244
Adventures on Wheels . . . 244
Cycling . . . 244
Mountain Biking . . . 244
Adventures on Horseback . . . 245
Shopping . . . 245
Road Town . . . 246
Soper's Hole . . . 248
Around the Island . . . 248
Where to Stay . . . 249
Rental Agencies . . . 250
In & Near Road Town . . . 250
North Shore . . . 252
South Shore . . . 254
Where to Eat . . . 255
In & Near Road Town . . . 256
East End . . . 260
North Shore . . . 260
West End . . . 263
Nightlife . . . 264

Island Facts & Numbers 265
Virgin Gorda 268
Overview 268
A Brief History 268
Getting There 269
By Air 269
By Ferry 269
Getting Around 270
By Taxi 270
By Car 270
Touring the Island 270
Independent Driving Tour 272
Adventures on Water 273
Best Beaches 273
Scuba Diving & Snorkeling 274
Dive Operators 275
Boating & Sailing 275
Watersports & Sportfishing 276
Adventures on Foot 277
Hiking 277
Shopping 277
Spanish Town 277
Where to Stay 278
Rental Agencies 280
In & Around The Valley 281
North Sound 282
Where to Eat 284
Spanish Town 284
The Baths 284
The Valley 285
North Sound 286
Nightlife 286
Live Music 286
Island Facts & Numbers 287
Jost Van Dyke 289
Overview 289
What to Do 290
Where to Stay & Eat 291
White Bay 291
Great Harbour 292
Little Harbour 292
Anegada 294
Overview 294
Getting There 295
Getting Around 296

Adventures on Water 296
Where to Stay 297
Where to Eat 298
Single-Resort Islands 300
Marina Cay 300
Diamond Reef 300
Saba Rock 301
Cooper Island 302
Peter Island 302

■ **Index** 305

The Islands

The United States and United Kingdom share an extraordinary mix of islands sprinkled along the northern curve of the Lesser Antilles just east of Puerto Rico. Known collectively as *The Virgin Islands,* they offer some of the world's most beautiful scenery and idyllic weather. The major islands are amazingly diverse, and each has a well-defined personality, while the 100 or so minor islands (most uninhabited and no larger than prominent rocks) provide privacy and space for anyone who cares to seek it (and can afford it).

St. Thomas, **St. John** and **St. Croix** (the three main US Virgins) are more like disparate kin than siblings. Only two miles of water separate St. Thomas and St. John, and visitors often ferry between the strikingly handsome pair. St. Thomas is the cosmopolitan capitalist, St. John the rugged environmentalist.

Many visitors say that St. Croix, 40 miles to the south, is a combination of the best of St. Thomas and St. John. But I believe the island marches to the beat of a different drummer, flaunting its Danish past flamboyantly and asserting its originality. Of the three, it's the least American, the most Caribbean in atmosphere.

Among the sparsely developed British Virgins, **Tortola** is the largest and most populated island. Visitors are drawn to its green mountains, sheltered bays, and easygoing lifestyle, but few are content to stay put for long. Most hop about by ferry or speed boat to The Baths on **Virgin Gorda**, the coral-sand beaches on **Anegada**, Foxy's famous bar on **Jost Van Dyke**, the caves on **Norman Island** and the sea turtle playgrounds on **Peter Island**.

If you can't decide which island to call home base, charter a live-aboard boat, so you can change location on a whim. While it's tiresome to clear Customs each time you cross the international boundary that zigzags invisibly between St. John and Tortola, you'll enjoy the freedom of visiting two countries and countless islands in one vacation.

Of course, you may prefer to pick one island and explore it thoroughly at a leisurely pace. All of the major islands offer enough creature comforts and diversions to keep world-weary travelers content for at least a week, and each one offers fabulous sun, sea and sand.

A Dozen Reasons To Visit

- Duty-free shopping.
- Endless powder-soft sand and a marked underwater snorkel trail on Buck Island.
- Hiking trails on Sage Mountain, Tortola and in the national park on St. John.
- Picnics on deserted islands.
- Snorkeling among the massive boulders at The Baths on Virgin Gorda.
- Romantic dining at award-winning waterfront restaurants.
- Outstanding scuba diving among coral reefs and ancient shipwrecks.
- Ruined and restored sugar plantations to explore.
- Sunrise at Point Udall on St. Croix, the easternmost spot in the United States.
- Sailing through the Sir Francis Drake Channel.
- Lively nightlife in Cruz Bay on St. John.
- The five-foot rock iguanas and flamingo colonies on remote Anegada.

A Capsule History

The First Inhabitants

Archeologists have found indications that people lived on some of the Virgin Islands as early as 710 BC. Most likely, the first inhabitants were primitive tribesmen from South America who migrated up the Antilles on crudely made barges. These early wanderers left only scattered tokens of their nomadic existence, but the **Tainos** (a now-extinct branch of Arawak Indians) who followed around 100 AD left behind evidence of well-run villages, cultivated land and religious celebrations.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The word Taino meant "men of the good" in the Arawak language, and Tainos lived up to their name by being pragmatic, peaceful people who believed that nature had a soul as real as their own.

The Taino honored trees, rivers, mountains, animals and weather with carved wooden statuettes, which they called *zemis.* Their own bodies were decorated with natural-dye paint and bits of shell or bone.

Taino Arawaks lived in villages headed by a chief who lived in a rectangular hut called a *bohios*. Families lived in round huts called *caneyes*, which were made of wood and topped with straw. Amazingly, these simple structures were strong enough to withstand hurricanes. Villagers farmed, made simple tools from sticks, fished with baskets woven from reeds and cooked on hot stones or over open fires.

Sometime around 1300 AD, hostile bands of **Carib Indians** moved up the island chain from South America in huge dugout canoes. Archeological evidence and oral legends reveal that the Caribs terrorized the docile Tainos, but there is no proof that the Caribs were successful in wiping out entire villages, much less exterminating the Taino bloodline.

Caribs lived in small villages made up of wooden huts grouped around a central fireplace. The men fished and the women farmed to provide food for the settlement. When a young male reached maturity, the village organized a raid on neighboring communities to capture a suitable wife. (Taino brides were preferred because they raised their children with Arawak skills and manners, which were more refined than those of the Caribs.)

Historians generally agree that the Caribs were ruthless warriors who attacked from long canoes that could carry up to 75 men. They used poisoned arrows, javelins, and clubs to subdue their victims and also captured women for slaves. Early European explorers claimed that the indians were cannibals, but anthropologists think the Caribs probably ate their victim's flesh only on rare ceremonial occasions to boost morale among the warriors.

Despite their reputation as fierce fighters, the Caribs were religious people who worshiped benevolent spirits that they believed dwelled in bats. All Caribs kept pet bats to house their own altruistic gods. Good health, abundant crops, productive hunts and successful battles were

attributed to pleased bats who were kept content with gifts of bread and fruit.

By 1493, when **Columbus** and his men sailed into Salt River Bay on St. Croix in search of fresh water, the Caribs dominated the island. The Europeans were startled by the naked Indians who decorated their bodies with dye and wore shells and bones in their noses and ears. The Caribs were no less shocked by the white men, who appeared deformed by their clothes and heavy armor. A few skirmishes broke out before Columbus ordered his ships back to sea.

As he sailed north from St. Croix, Columbus passed a cluster of gorgeous islands that he speculated were untouched and blessed with many riches. He named a few individually, but called the sprawling island group *Las Virgines* in honor of St. Ursula and her virgin followers, who were slaughtered by the Huns in Cologne during the fourth century.

Throughout the next 100 years, the Virgin Islands (often called simply "The Virgins") served as a stopover point for cargo ships traveling between Europe and the Americas, but no permanent settlements were established. Spain claimed all of the West Indies as theirs by right of discovery and attempted to tame the Indians and convert them to Catholicism. The natives responded by raiding Spanish supply posts on land and attacking Spanish ships anchored offshore.

The Age of Piracy

At the time when Columbus and his successors were searching for a speedy trade route to India, most of Europe was still an agglomeration of bickering principalities without the leadership to support worldwide exploration and expansion. As a result, when **Spain** stumbled onto the New World and began bringing back treasure from the Americas, no legitimate government had the resources to compete.

England and **France** attempted to cut into Spain's monopoly, but without an offshore base in the Atlantic, their efforts rarely succeeded. Finally, in 1572, an Englishman named Francis Drake led a two-ship raid on Panama, defeated the Spanish troops stationed there, and returned home loaded with silver and gold. This persuaded English and French officials to hire other seamen to stage naval attacks on Spanish galleons. As payment for defeating the enemy, the sailors were allowed to keep any valuables they seized.

Soon, entrepreneurs were buying ships, hiring crews and setting out to defeat the Spanish navy. Some obtained letters of marque from their government that legitimized their raids. Others did not. Those that held letters were called privateers and entitled to be treated as soldiers if they were captured. Those without letters were called pirates and could be punished by hanging.

Legend maintains that numerous pirates based their unsavory headquarters in the Virgins and buried their loot on the islands. Some divers still hope to find chests full of seized gold sunk in the wrecks that lie at the bottom of the ocean.

Pirates of the Caribbean

- About 2,000 pirates rampaged through the Atlantic between 1650 and 1725.
- Buccaneers were pirates who worked independently in the Caribbean. The word originally described French looters who smoked meat on a wooden frame called a *boucan.* (Pirates who operated off the coast of Africa were known as *corsairs.*)
- Most pirates were poor, and a typical raid netted only tobacco, cotton, spare sails and a few tools. A good haul might include a couple of slaves and pocket change from the sailors.
- Lucky pirates might capture a ship full of doubloons (Spanish gold coins) or pieces of eight (Spanish silver coins).
- Pirates buried very little treasure. When they managed to sack a wealthy ship, they usually spent the loot on liquor, women and gambling as soon as they returned to port.
- Pirates didn't have time to make prisoners walk the plank. Instead, they quickly hacked victims into pieces and threw them overboard.
- As many as a third of all Caribbean pirates were black. These former slaves were liberated from captured ships and would fight to their death in order to remain free.
- A few women became pirates despite a rule in the pirate's code that stated women were not allowed aboard ship. They gained acceptance by disguising themselves as men, but sometimes revealed their true identity once they were part of the ship's crew.

- Pirates had written contracts that stipulated a code of conduct and were signed by all new crew members. Three of the most important points of the code were: a ship's leaders are elected by democratic vote, a captain is granted absolute power during battle, and captured treasure is divided among the crew.
- Work-related injuries were compensated according to a scale that designated importance to various body parts. A pirate who lost a right arm was paid 600 silver coins – a left leg was worth 400, and an eye was valued at 100.
- When a pirate was captured and tried in the admiralty courts, the sentence was usually death by "dancing the hemp jig," a pirate's term for hanging.

Plantations & Colonies

Europeans began to establish permanent communities on some of the Virgins early in the 17th century. The Dutch and English settled on St. Croix around 1625; the **French West Indies Company** moved in several years later. Around the same time, Denmark colonized St. Thomas and St. John, while England settled Tortola.

Individual islands frequently changed ownership as England, France, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands vied for control of the region. Vast sugar cane plantations gradually took the place of small farms on the major islands, and large numbers of slaves were brought in to work the fields. Soon, the islands had a cultural mix of aboriginal Indians, various Europeans and African slaves.

Early censuses show that more than half of the islands' residents were black, and the Virgins ran a thriving slave market as part of its *triangle trade.* This three-sided commerce involved ships sailing from North America, buying rum in the islands, then going on to Africa where they would trade rum for slaves. Some of these slaves were exchanged for more rum when the ships stopped in the islands before heading back to America loaded with both slaves and rum.

Life on the plantation was extremely difficult for slaves. They were underfed, overworked and severely punished for breaking even the smallest rule. When the islands were hit by a succession of hurricanes and droughts, plantation owners took out their frustrations on the slaves. By the time news of emancipation in other parts of the world reached the islands, conditions were right for a slave rebellion.

Slavery was abolished in Britain in 1808 and was extended to all the British Islands in 1834. Denmark decreed in 1847 that all slaves would be free on the Danish Islands by 1859. However, the slaves resented the 12-year wait and planned widespread demonstrations. Rather than face the danger and destruction that would result from mass rebellion, the Danish government announced the emancipation of all slaves on July 3, 1848.

Around the same time, sugar beet was introduced in Europe and prices for island-produced cane fell. Plantation owners were hit by the simultaneous loss of free labor and a profitable crop. Many deserted their holdings and returned to Europe, leaving the islands in the hands of former slaves.

Emancipation & Citizenship

Freed slaves lived peaceful, ungoverned lives on the islands for almost 100 years after emancipation. They were poor but managed to feed, clothe and shelter themselves from the bounty of the land and sea.

Since the islands were no longer a booming economic asset, Denmark accepted a bid from the United States to purchase St. Thomas and St. John for $7.5 million in 1867. The Spanish-American War interrupted the sale, and the US again tried to buy the islands in 1902, this time including St. Croix, at a cost of $5 million. Negotiations failed for the second time due to political haggling. Finally, at the beginning of World War I, the US realized the urgent necessity of having military bases in the Caribbean and quickly agreed to pay Denmark $25 million for all the Danish Virgin Islands.

On March 31, 1917, American flags were raised on St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix, and the islands became known as the US Virgin Islands. Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, Jost Van Dyke and their outer islands were subsequently called the British Virgin Islands and remained part of the larger Leeward Islands Federation.

Government & Economy

When the islands became divided into the US and the UK groups in 1917, political and economic development was different for each island group. The western USVI progressed at a faster pace.

The Navy controlled the US Virgin Islands throughout World War I, and the territory was treated as a strategic defense base rather than a valuable and equitable addition to the nation. Finally, in 1931, military rule was replaced by civil government. A year later, all natives of the USVI were granted citizenship. In 1936, the new citizens were allowed to vote and granted all rights guaranteed under the US Constitution.

Demonstrations broke out on the British Islands in 1949, with residents demanding more representation in the government and closer affiliation with their US neighbors. Ten years later, the last governor of the Leeward Islands Federation left office, and the British Virgin Islands was granted territorial status. Today, the BVI is a self-governing colony of the United Kingdom with a governor appointed by the queen and a chief minister elected by popular vote.

The greatest economic development came to the islands when demand for sugar and rum picked up during World War II. Increased income provided better housing and social conditions, and the economy expanded even more when tourism intensified after Cuba was closed to Americans in the 1960s.

Today, residents of the Virgins enjoy a high standard of living and the economy continues to grow. The islands are considered leaders in the development of ecology-based sustainable tourism, as well as charter yacht operations. In addition, the economy is stimulated by tax incentives offered to island-based corporations.

Land & Sea

Geography

St. Thomas, the most western of the Virgin Islands, is located about 1,000 miles south of Miami and 75 miles east of Puerto Rico. The other Virgins extend in an upward-swinging curve to the east, excluding St. Croix, which lies 40 miles to the south. Most of the islands are bounded by the Atlantic on the north and the Caribbean on the south, except for St. Croix, which is entirely in the Caribbean, and Anegada, which is entirely in the Atlantic.

The Virgins are divided into two groups, with the US islands to the west and the British islands to the east. St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix are the major US islands. Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada and

Islands of
The Caribbean
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Florida
Bahama Islands
CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
VIRGIN ISLANDS
PUERTO RICO
Anguilla
Barbuda
Antigua
St. Kitts & Nevis
Guadeloupe
Dominica
Martinique
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Grenada
Barbados
Trinidad & Tobago
Atlantic Ocean
JAMAICA
HAITI
HONDURAS
Caribbean Sea
Aruba
Curaçao
Tortuga
Margarita
NICARAGUA
COLOMBIA
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC
NOT TO SCALE

Jost Van Dyke are the prominent British islands. All are connected by ferry, seaplane or small airplane service, and their close proximity makes for an ideal island-hopping itinerary.

Most of the Virgin Islands are separated by less than five miles (the exceptions are St. Croix, 40 miles south, and Anegada, 15 miles north). All but Anegada are hilly and volcanic in origin, and each is fringed with gorgeous beaches.

USVI

St. Thomas covers 32 square miles and is 13 miles long and four miles wide at its broadest point. Hills run almost the entire length of the island, which means you must go up and over to get from one side to the other. White-sand beaches encircle the tropically rugged landscape.

St. John's 20 square miles is two-thirds Virgin Islands National Park and surprisingly undisturbed despite its 5,000 residents and popularity with tourists. Hiking trails and campgrounds make the park highly accessible, and its pristine beaches and clear water draw all types of water sports enthusiasts.

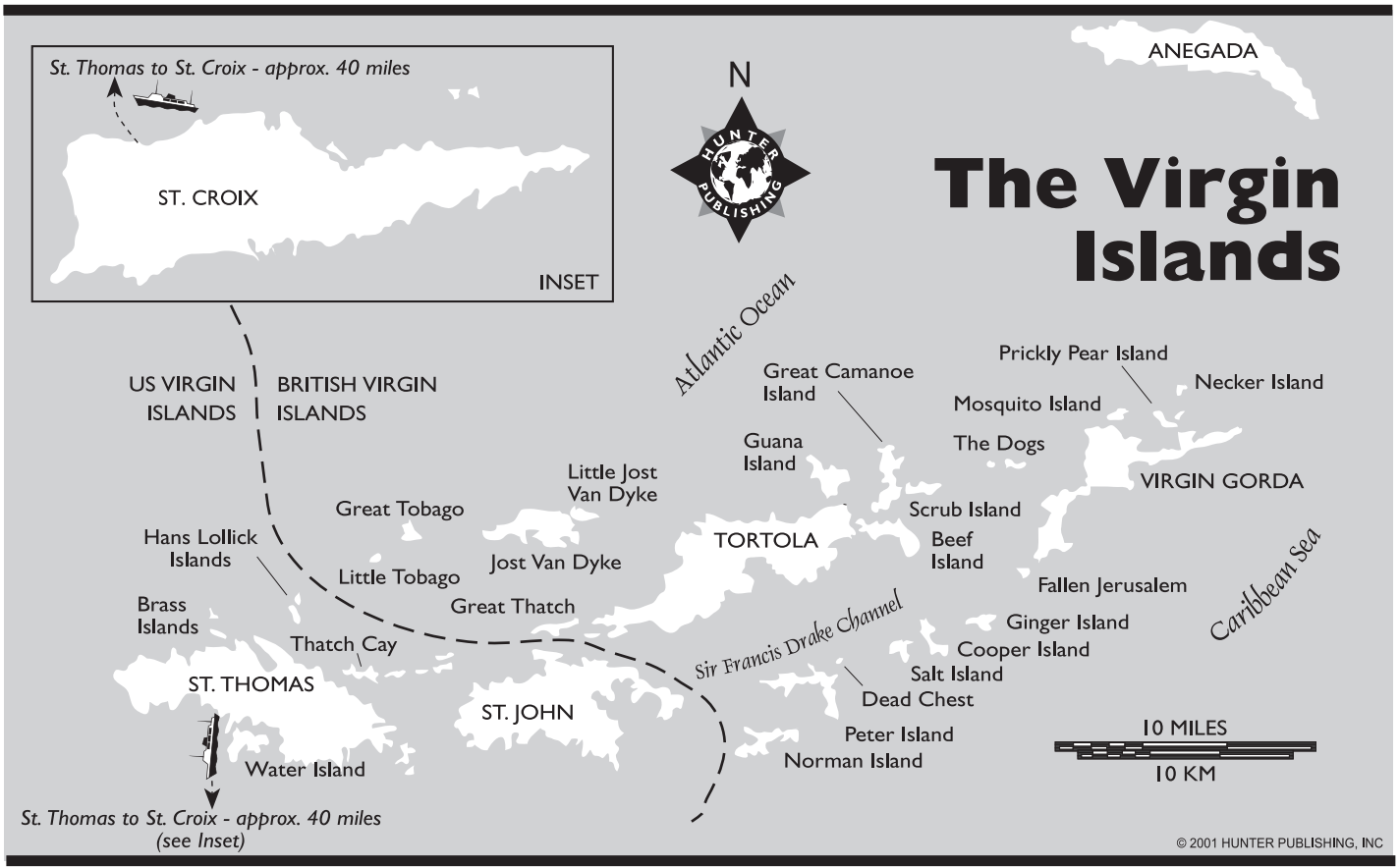
St. Croix is the largest of the Virgins, with 84 square miles of diverse countryside. Visitors who drive its 28-mile length will pass from the dry, rocky east tip (the easternmost point of the United States) to a lush rain forest in the western mountains. The island has fantastic white-sand beaches, and both diving and deep-sea fishing are excellent in the surrounding Caribbean Sea.

BVI

Anegada is a flat 15-square-mile limestone and coral island that is prized for its deserted sandy shores. More than 200 ships have wrecked on the reefs that surround the island, which makes it popular with scuba divers.

Tortola is the largest and hilliest of the BVI. It covers 21 square miles and offers extraordinary beaches on its northern shore and fantastic outlooks from its hilltops.

Virgin Gorda is only seven miles long, but it has one of the most popular geological sites in all the Virgin Islands – **The Baths**. These massive boulders at the southwestern tip of the island form underwater caves and concealed swimming pools which provide infinite adventures for snorkelers. High hills in the north and central parts of the is-


St. Thomas to St. Croix - approx. 40 miles
ST. CROIX
INSET
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
ANEGADA
The Virgin Islands
Atlantic Ocean
US VIRGIN ISLANDS
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
Great Camanoe Island
Prickly Pear Island
Necker Island
Mosquito Island
Guana Island
The Dogs
Little Jost Van Dyke
VIRGIN GORDA
Great Tobago
Scrub Island
Hans Lollick Islands
TORTOLA
Beef Island
Jost Van Dyke
Little Tobago
Fallen Jerusalem
Brass Islands
Great Thatch
Caribbean Sea
Ginger Island
Thatch Cay
Sir Francis Drake Channel
Cooper Island
ST. THOMAS
Salt Island
Dead Chest
ST. JOHN
Peter Island
Norman Island
10 MILES
10 KM
Water Island
St. Thomas to St. Croix - approx. 40 miles
(see Inset)
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

land have been set aside as national parks (Gorda Peak and Little Fork), so much of the island's natural beauty is protected from development.

Jost Van Dyke is a mere four miles in length, but its tall hills make it an impressive sight. Day-trippers make the four-mile trip from Tortola to enjoy the fabulous white-sand beaches on the south coast.

Norman Island is known for its four caves and is said to be the breathtakingly beautiful setting of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island.*

Climate

Year-round sun, balmy trade winds and relatively low rainfall make the Virgin Islands' climate monotonously perfect. Weather patterns are remarkably stable, and when an occasional storm does kick up, it usually moves on to the north before it becomes strong enough to do much damage.

CLIMATE CHART

MONTH	AVG. TEMP. (°F)	AVG. RAINFALL (inches)
January	77.1	3.34
February	76.9	2.47
March	77.6	2.64
April	78.6	3.70
May	80.2	5.72
June	81.8	3.36
July	82.5	4.29
August	82.4	5.83
September	82.0	6.56
October	81.5	6.27
November	79.9	6.08
December	78.1	4.12
ANNUAL	79.9	54.38

Statistics provided by the US National Parks Dept., Cruz Bay, St. John.

Average temperatures range from the 70s at night to the 80s during the day, with rare and brief periods of higher heat on a few summer afternoons. Even during the rainy season, which runs from late summer through autumn, most parts of most days are sunny, and only 40 to 50 inches of rain fall each year.

Visitors who enjoy sailing and windsurfing can depend on a steady 15- to 20-knot northeast trade wind during the winter and a slightly weaker southeast breeze during the summer. Caribbean hurricanes get a lot of press, but the truth is that the Virgin Islands have fewer severe tropical storms than the eastern United States. Those that do blow through develop slowly, so residents and visitors have plenty of time to prepare or evacuate.

Flora & Fauna

Don't expect to see a lot of critters roaming around the Virgin Islands. While there are plenty of insects, birds and fish to see, most of the land-dwelling wildlife is hidden under rocks or plants.

Wildlife

The **white-tailed deer** is the largest mammal found on the islands. This species was brought here late in the 18th century to provide game for hunters, but only a few can now be found. Pesky **wild donkeys** wander the hills on St. John rummaging through picnic supplies, ripping into trash bags and creating havoc for local gardeners. Don't mistake them for tame pets – they bite. **Wild pigs** also present a problem on St. John. While they rarely bother people, they eat the roots of plants and cause environmental damage.

Another annoying animal is the **mongoose**, which can be seen scurrying from place to place. Mongooses were imported from India in the 19th century to devour the burgeoning rat population. The rats had orginally arrived as stowaways on European ships and were destroying the sugar cane fields. Since rats are nocturnal and the mongoose hunts for food during the day, the two rarely came into contact. Instead, this squirrel-like predator is responsible for eliminating many of the islands' reptiles and ground-nesting birds.

Several types of **lizards** live on the islands and most locals encourage them to come right indoors, since the little reptiles have an insatiable appetite for mosquitoes and other bugs. The most commonly seen is the anole tree lizard, which does a comical push-up routine while inflating a flap in its throat. When they're not working out, they can be recognized by their pointed noses. Geckos are another familiar lizard on the islands. They are distinguished by their long, sticky toes, which they use to scamper up walls and trees.

Iguanas, the large prehistoric-looking lizards, have been known to grow up to five feet in length. Unfortunately, they are almost extinct on the islands, but they are sometimes seen sleeping in trees or lumbering about in protected areas. Some resorts and outdoor restaurants encourage them to hang out in garden areas by planting blooming hibiscus trees, the iguanas' favorite treat, and setting out plates of fruit and vegetable scraps for the reptiles.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** ***Insects*** *flourish in the tropics, but lizards do a good job of controlling their numbers and the trade winds prevent them from settling in one place for too long. Some travelers are bothered by bites more than others, so it's a good idea to keep insect repellent on hand and use a product such as Sting-Eze if the itch is intense.*

Marine Life

Ghost crabs never leave the beach. They tunnel into the sand, then dart out of their holes, zip a few feet across the wet beach, then burrow down again and disappear. At night, they emerge to feed, and during a full moon hordes of them can be seen scooting around the beach.

One of the most popular shelled creatures in the Caribbean is the **Conch** (pronounced Konk). Its meat is the key ingredient in many island recipes, and collectors covet the large shells, which have a pearly pink interior and echo the sound of ocean waves. It's not unusual to see islanders cleaning and selling the more perfect shells near busy piers.

Hermit crabs live on land but lay their eggs in water, so during spawning season, hundreds of them dash down the hillsides to become parents on the coast. After the baby crabs hatch, they spend a few months in the ocean before trudging onto land, carrying enough water in their shells to sustain themselves for a while. When they grow too big for their backpack homes, they look about for larger dwellings – sometimes killing and eating other hermits so they can steal the shell. If a suitable shell isn't available, they will move into almost any kind of container. Hermit crabs will eat almost any kind of garbage, including sewage.

Sea turtles are fascinating creatures, and several endangered species are protected by law in the Virgin Islands. Females come ashore at night on remote beaches to dig their nests and lay eggs. After burying the eggs with a thin layer of warm sand, the female returns to offshore waters, and the eggs incubate for six to nine weeks, depending upon the type of turtle. The youngsters hatch at night and instinctively turn toward the sea where they live and grow to maturity. A female turtle can take up to 50 years to reach reproductive maturity, at which point she returns to her place of birth to lay eggs.

Leatherbacks, the largest of the sea turtles, are an endangered species. They have a leather-like skin over their backs instead of a shell. The largest leatherback ever recorded measured 10 feet from tip to tail, but the average length is five feet. A mature leatherback weighs upward of 1,000 pounds. Poachers seek out leatherbacks' eggs, thus threatening the dwindling population. In addition, many of them die when they eat discarded plastic bags, which they mistake for jellyfish, their favorite food.

Hawksbills, also endangered, have a hawk-like beak and grow to about three feet in diameter and average 130 pounds. They live around warm-water reefs and primarily eat other sea creatures, such as crabs and snails, but also dine on encrusted organisms that they scrape off rocks with their pointed noses.

Green turtles have a rounded head and also grow to be about three feet around, but are usually much heavier than a hawksbill. They prefer to live in the tall grasses that grow on the ocean floor where they

graze like cattle. During nesting season, hundreds of them come ashore to lay their eggs in the sand.

From December until May, migrating **whales** move through the water around the Virgin Islands. Lucky passengers sometimes spot the whales on boat trips, and playful **dolphins** are known to swim alongside ferries as they shuttle between the islands.

Birdlife

Dozens of species of tropical birds breed on the islands. The **yellow breast** (*Coreba flaveola*) is the official national bird of the Virgin Islands and visitors recognize it by its bright yellow feathers.

ISLAND LINGO

Islanders also call the yellow breast the **banana bird** because of its color, or the **sugar bird** because of its love for sweets.

Many birds migrate to the islands for the winter, and the national parks provide safe nesting grounds for native species. Frigates, pelicans, brown boobies, parakeets and sparrow hawks are year-round residents on most islands. Kingfishers, sandpipers and warblers come for the winter.

Anegada has a 1,100-acre bird sanctuary where flamingos, ospreys, herons and terns find shelter. More than 160 species of birds live on St. John, and birdwatchers enjoy spotting unusual varieties such as the yellow-billed cuckoo and the West Indian whistling duck.

Plants

Varying levels of rainfall create different ecosystems, but tropical vegetation is common throughout the islands. In addition, agriculture and the introduction of non-native plants has altered the natural landscape. Nevertheless, hundreds of species of trees, shrubs, flowers and plants grow on each island. More than 800 different species flourish in the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John.

The indigenous **yellow elder** or **yellow cedar** is the official flower of the US Virgin Islands and it blooms all year long. Most of the islands have flowering **flamboyant** and **frangipani** trees. In the summer, the flamboyant is covered with brilliant red flowers, while the frangipani has white or pink flowers.

Seagrape trees are common on the beaches. Some grow as tall as 30 feet, and the female bears clusters of fruit that turn purple when they are ripe. These grapes are edible, but most people prefer them sweetened in jams or desserts. **Coconut palms** also are common on the beaches, and they can grow in sandy areas where few plants survive.

ISLAND LINGO

Islanders call the immature coconut fruit a **jelly nut,** and enjoy drinking the liquid from the shell before eating the soft meat inside.

Other indigenous trees include the **bay rum,** whose dark-green aromatic leaves produce an oil that once was made into a cologne on St. John; the **kapok**, whose silky fiber is used as filler in life jackets; and the **calabash**, whose fronds make excellent brooms.

Manchineel trees typically grow along the coast, and most are identified by signs or red paint on the trunk.

The sap and small fruit of the manchineel tree are poisonous and cause intense stinging if they come in contact with the skin. Illness or death can result from eating the fruit.

In the forests, **evergreens** grow as high as 75 feet, providing shade for shrubs, vines, ferns, mosses and bromeliads. Drier areas produce turpentine trees, white cedars and a variety of cacti.

The water-rooted **mangrove** trees thrive along the coasts, where they provide shelter for marine animals and birds.

Coral Reefs

A reef is a living community of various organisms and must have sunlight, oxygen and food to survive. The reef itself is a rock-like structure built from coral and algae. Worms, fish and other sea creatures break down and rearrange the growth, creating a more solid base for additional development. Reefs grow slowly, and "branches" of the structure may increase by only three or four inches each year. Large brain corals are often hundreds of years old. Unfortunately, careless swimmers, divers and boaters often cause harm to the easily-damaged reefs through carelessness.

Many animals live on and around a reef, including moray eels, starfish, urchins, crabs, sponges, lobsters and anemones. Coral reefs often draw parrotfish, tangs, snappers, angels and squirrel fish.

INTERESTING FACT: *Coral polyps feed at only during the night. The gather food by extending tentacles from their skeletal homes to capture plankton from the water.*

Reefs develop best when water temperatures are between 70 and 80°. Most sand is actually tiny fragments of broken-down coral that are carried to shore by waves, tides and currents. When reefs are prevented from growing and breaking down naturally, there is no new sand, and, therefore, no replenished beaches. Reefs also defend beaches from powerful ocean waves. Coasts that are not protected by reefs are usually rocky and craggy.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *You can see a natural coral reef without getting wet at Coral World on the north coast of St. Thomas (see page 58).*

Travel Information

When To Go

Everyone imagines being on a Caribbean island during the winter when the weather is miserable most everywhere else. While winter is an ideal time to visit the Virgin Islands, summer, spring and fall have advantages, too.

Island Celebrations

Since temperatures remain steadily in the 80s year-round, smart travelers often prefer to go to the islands during the summer off-season when more bargains are available. Summer also is the season when the islands celebrate a variety of events. St. John holds its Carnival during July, and the British Islands celebrate a two-week Summer Festival in August.

A spring trip brings a host of other offerings. Virgin Gorda puts on a grand festival in March, and St. Thomas holds its week-long Carnival in April. Also in April, sailing enthusiasts from all over the world gather for the long-running BVI Spring Regatta. Sports fishermen show up in May to kick off the fishing season.

Endless summer continues into fall with the BVI International Rugby Festival and a sailing regatta on Jost Van Dyke. Right up through the American Thanksgiving in the USVI, there are boat shows and races, island-wide rum parties and other festivals. The entire month of December is given over to various Christmas celebrations on each island, and St. Croix hosts a 12-day Christmas Fiesta.

For the exact dates of specific festivals and celebrations, contact the government tourist offices listed in the **Island Facts & Numbers** section at the end of each island chapter.

> ***NOTE:*** *If a legal holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday becomes the official holiday.*

Legal Holidays - US Virgin Islands

■ JANUARY

1st. . . . . New Year's Day
6th. . . . . Three King's Day
15th . . . . . Martin Luther King's Birthday

■ FEBRUARY

Third Monday . . . . . Presidents' Day

■ MARCH

31st . . . . . Transfer Day
Celebrates the transfer of island ownership to the US in 1917.

■ APRIL

March or April. . . . . Holy Thursday
March or April . . . . . Good Friday
March or April . . . . . Easter Monday

■ MAY

Last Monday . . . . . Memorial Day

■ JUNE

Third Monday . . . . . Organic Act Day

■ JULY

3rd . . . . . West Indies Emancipation Day
Emancipation announced in Frederiksted, St. Croix, in 1848.
4th. . . . . Independence Day
Fourth Monday . . . . . Supplication Day
A day of prayer asking that no hurricanes hit the islands.

■ SEPTEMBER

First Monday . . . . . Labor Day

■ OCTOBER

Second Mon . . . Columbus Day, Puerto Rico Friendship Day
A boat trip is made to Puerto Rico to express friendship.
Third Monday . . . . . Local Thanksgiving Day

■ NOVEMBER

1st . . . . . Liberty Day
11th. . . . . Veterans Day
Fourth Thursday . . . . . Thanksgiving Day

■ DECEMBER

25th . . . . . Christmas Day
26th . . . . . Christmas Second Day

Legal Holidays - British Virgin Islands

■ JANUARY

1st. . . . . New Year's Day

■ MARCH

Second Monday . . . . . Commonwealth Day

■ APRIL

March or April. . . . . Holy Thursday
March or April . . . . . Good Friday
March or April . . . . . Easter Monday

■ MAY

First Monday . . . . . Labor Day

■ JUNE

Late May/early June . . . . . Whit Monday
Second Saturday . . . . . Queen's Birthday

■ JULY

Beginning of July . . . . . Territory Day
Celebrates the day in 1956 when the islands gained territorial status and the right to administer their government.

■ AUGUST

First Monday-Wednesday . . . . . Carnival

■ OCTOBER

Around 21st . . . . . St. Ursula's Day
Celebrates the feast day of the Christian saint and her maids who were killed by the Huns in Germany. Columbus named the islands in their honor.

■ NOVEMBER

1st . . . . . Independence Day
15th . . . . . Birthday of heir to the throne of England, Prince Charles.

■ DECEMBER

25th . . . . . Christmas Day
26th . . . . . Boxing Day

Travel Documents

The best advice when traveling outside the continental boundaries of your home country is to carry a valid passport, even if you think you don't need one. Since regulations are subject to change, it's always a good idea to check with the tourist office of the country you'll be visiting for current visa requirements. The toll-free number for the **US Virgin Islands Division of Tourism** is ☎ 800-372-8784. To contact the **British Virgin Islands Tourist Board**, ☎ 800-835-8530. (See *Island Facts & Numbers* for additional contact information.)

Passports & Paperwork

Currently, to enter the US Virgin Islands, a valid passport is recommended for all visitors. However, an expired passport or an original birth certificate with a raised seal plus current photo identification is acceptable for visitors born in the United States or Canada. Citizens of all other countries must have a valid passport, and any other documents required for entrance into the continental United States. Check with the tourist board if you are unsure of US visa or waiver regulations for your country of citizenship.

When entering the BVI for visits of less than six months, US and Canadian citizens must present a valid passport, or an expired passport or birth certificate with a raised seal plus current photo ID. Visitors from all other countries, including the UK, must have a valid passport. Immigration officials may ask visitors to present an ongoing ticket off the island and to provide the name of prearranged accommodations, as well as prove that they have adequate money to support themselves during their stay. While all officials do not routinely request such information, it's best to be prepared. Remember that you must carry required documentation when you travel between the USVI and BVI.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Make two copies of all documents, tickets, confirmation numbers and other important data before you leave home. Leave one copy with a reliable friend and carry the other separately from the originals. If your papers are lost or stolen, you can quickly get replacements.*

Customs & Duty-Free

Allowances

Basic regulations allow citizens of foreign countries to enter the USVI and BVI with 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, a liter of alcohol and unlimited gifts valued at less than $100 each. Rules vary between the US and British islands, but visitors who stay within these limits will have no problems.

Returning American citizens who have been out of the country for at least 48 hours may claim $1,200 worth of duty-free goods from the USVI every 30 days. This is double the amount of goods that may be brought back duty-free from other islands covered by the Caribbean Basin Initiative (check with the Customs Office for a list of CBI members) and three times higher than the $400 limit allowed from most foreign countries. If a single vacation includes both the USVI and the BVI (or other islands included in the Caribbean Basin Initiative), the allowance is still $1,200, but at least $600 worth of goods must be from the USVI.

DUTY-FREE BARGAINS

A duty-free shop is one that has not paid import duties on the merchandise it is selling. This may mean that the merchant will pass the savings on to the consumer, but that's not always the case, so check prices before you buy.

All purchases from duty-free shops must be listed when returning home, and duty will be charged on items that exceed the allowed exemptions.

Individuals who exceed their USVI exemption are charged a flat 5% tax on the next $1,000 worth of goods instead of the standard 10% levied on purchases from other foreign countries. One gift worth $100 or less may be mailed to the US from the USVI each day without declaring the value as part of the allowed exemption.

US travelers more than 21 years of age may bring back four liters of liquor plus an additional liter of USVI-produced liquor without paying duty. In addition, all citizens may return with 100 non-Cuban cigars,

200 cigarettes, unlimited antiques and any amount of art work that is more than 100 years old. An unlimited amount of products that are made in the USVI will also be tax-free, but a certificate of origin is required for anything valued at more than $25. Unset precious gems and original paintings are unrestricted, too.

Customs regulations are complex and vary with each country. Citizens of countries other than the United States and all travelers who plan to make expensive or unusual purchases would be wise to check with the appropriate agency before leaving on vacation.

US Customs Service. . . . . ☎ 202-927-6724
US Department of Agriculture . . . . . ☎ 340-776-2787
Revenue Canada. . . . . ☎ 613-993-0534
HM Customs & Excise (for UK citizens) . . ☎ 0171-2024227

Getting There

By Air

Several major airlines have flights to the Virgin Islands, either directly or through San Juan, Puerto Rico. The islands continually vie for increased air service, so check with a travel agent about new routes before booking a flight.

AIRLINE CONTACT INFORMATION	
INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES	
Air Canada	☎ 800-776-3000 (US), 800-268-7240 (Canada); www.air-canada.ccom
American Airlines	☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com
British Airways	☎ 800-247-9297; www.british-airways.com
BWIA (British W. Indies Air)	☎ 800-538-2942; www.bwee.com
Continental Airlines	☎ 800-523-3273; www.flycontinental.com
Delta Air Lines	☎ 800-325-1999; www.delta-air.com
Iberia	☎ 800-772-4642; www.iberia.com
Lufthansa	☎ 800-645-3880; www.lufthansa-usa.com

AIRLINE CONTACT INFORMATION	
INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES	
Northwest Airlines	☎ 800-447-4747; www.nwa.com
TWA (Trans World Airlines)	☎ 800-221-2000; www.twa.com
United Airlines	☎ 800-241-6522; www.ual.com
US Airways	☎ 800-428-4322; www.usair.com
REGIONAL AIRLINES	
Air Anguilla	☎ 340-776-5789
Air St. Thomas	☎ 800-522-3084; www.airstthomas.com
Air Sunshine	☎ 327-8900
American Eagle	☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com
BWIA	☎ 800-538-2942; www.bwee.com
Carib Air	☎ 800-981-0212
Cape Air	☎ 800-352-0714; www.flycapeair.com
Fly BVI	☎ 800-435-9284; www.fly-bvi.com
Gulfstream	☎ 800-231-0856, 800-525-0280; www.gulfstreamair.com
LIAT (Leeward Island Air Transport)	☎ 800-468-0482
Seaborne Aviation	☎ 888-FLY-TOUR or 809-777-4491
WINAIR	☎ 800-634-4907

American, Delta, Continental and **USAir** have direct flights from gateway cities in the US to St. Thomas and St. Croix. These and other carriers also fly directly into San Juan with quick connections by commuter airlines to St. Thomas or Tortola. **British Airways** and **BWIA** fly directly into Antigua, St. Martin or San Juan from London; **Iberia** flies from Madrid to San Juan; and **Lufthansa** flies from Frankfurt to San Juan. Commuter air service goes on to St. Thomas or Tortola.

Package Deals

Package vacations that include airfare and accommodations are often less expensive and more convenient than purchasing each separately. **American Fly-Away Vacations,** ☎ 800-321-2121, and **Delta's Dream Vacations,** ☎ 800-872-7786, are just two companies that offer

savings on hotel rooms when airfare is booked simultaneously. Travel agencies and tour operators may also sell air-accommodation packages. Shop around or do your research on the Internet.

By Sea

Several cruise lines call at ports in the Virgin Islands. St. Thomas frequently shows up on the itinerary of large ships, while St. Croix, Tortola, Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke are common stops for smaller ships. Passengers have only a few hours on each island, so this guide is a valuable resource for setting priorities and organizing sightseeing, shopping and sports activities.

American Canadian Caribbean Line is unique in offering a 12-day cruise to the Virgins with stops on all the major islands. Many travel agencies specialize in cruise vacations and can offer suggestions for other cruise lines with itineraries that include one or more island.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Look for an agent that belongs to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and subscribes to a publication called "The Official Cruise Guide."*

RECOMMENDED CRUISE TRAVEL AGENTS	
Cruise.com, owned by Omega World Travel, Inc.	☎ 800-303-3337; www.cruise.com
The Cruise Web, Inc	☎ 800-377-9383; fax 202-333-8401; www.cruiseweb.com
Cruise Outlet, a division of the Travel Company	☎ 800-489-0525; fax 704-541-0665; www.cruiseoutlet.com
The Cruise Outlet	☎ 800-775-1884; fax 203-248-8390; e-mail naba@netcom.com
World Wide Cruises	☎ 800-882-9000; www.preferr.com

Destinations change as new ships come into service and cruise companies adjust their itineraries, but the cruise lines listed in the following table are most likely to offer stops on islands covered in this guide.

Ships with a shallow draft are able to navigate narrow passageways and dock in small ports. If this type of vacation appeals to you, go with one of the smaller boats.

CRUISE LINES	
LARGER VESSELS	
Carnival	☎ 800-327-7276; www.carnival.com
Celebrity Cruises	☎ 800-CELEBRITY; fax 800-722-5329; www.celebritycruises.com
Cunard Line	☎ 800-528-6273; www.cunardline.com
Holland America	☎ 800-426-0327; fax 800-628-4855; www.hollandamerica.com
Norwegian	☎ 800-327-7030; fax 305-436-4106; www.ncl.com
Princess Cruises	☎ 800-774-6237; fax 310-277-6175; www.princesscruises.com
Royal Caribbean	☎ 800-327-6700; fax 305-374-7354; www.royalcaribbean.com
SMALLER VESSELS	
American Canadian Caribbean Line	☎ 401-247-0955, 800-556-74-50; fax 401-245- 8303
Clipper Cruise Line	☎ 800-325-0010; fax 314-727-6576; www.clippercruise.com

CRUISE LINES	
SMALLER VESSELS	
Windjammer Barefoot Cruises	☎ 800-327-2601
Windstar Cruises	☎ 800-258-7245; fax 206-286-3229; www.windstar.com
Seabourn	☎ 800-929-9595; www.seabourn.com

Island Hopping

Jumping from one Virgin Island to another is fun and easy. Airplanes, seaplanes, hydrofoils, ferries and private boats regularly travel among the larger US and British islands, and tour operators offer day-trips to the smaller islands. Many visitors prefer to charter a boat for inter-island jaunts.

Seabourne Seaplane, ☎ 340-777-4491, is a great way to travel between St. Thomas, Tortola and St. Croix. Passengers get a superb aerial view of the islands as they fly low-level from one to another. The seaplane takes off and lands in the harbor, so there is no airport hassle. Round-trip fares are about $100. Ticket kiosks are located at the harbors in Charlotte Amalia on St. Thomas, Christiansted on St. Croix and Road Town on Tortola.

The ***Katran II*** hydrofoil, ☎ 340-776-7417, provides round-trip service between Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas and Christiansted on St. Croix, Friday through Monday. The one-way trip takes about an hour and 15 minutes and tickets are $45. Morning and afternoon departures work well for day-trippers and visitors who want to spend a long weekend on either island.

Dohm's Catamaran powerboats run from Red Hook on St. Thomas to St. John, St. Croix or any of the British Virgin Islands. Make reservations at ☎ 340-775-6501.

Ferries travel between several points in the archipelago. Schedules change seasonally, but frequent service is provided year-round between both Red Hook and Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas to both West End and Road Town on Tortola as well as to Cruz Bay on St. John. Additional ferry service includes:

- Car ferries between Red Hook on, St. Thomas and Cruz Bay
- Passenger ferries between Christiansted on St. Croix and Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas.
- Passenger ferries from Tortola to Jost Van Dyke, Cooper Island, Virgin Gorda and Peter Island.

> **PLEASE NOTE:** *Visitors must clear Customs each time they travel between the USVI and the BVI. See "Passports & Paperwork," page 24, for information on documentation.*

Schedules and information are available at harborside kiosks; tickets may be purchased just before departure. Additional inter-island travel details are given in each island section of this guide.

FERRY SERVICE	
Native Son, Inc.	☎ 774-8685
Smith's Ferry	☎ 775-7292
Inter-Island Ferries	☎ 776-6597
Transportation Services	☎ 776-6282
Boyson, Inc. (car ferry)	☎ 776-6294
Republic Barge	☎ 779-4000

Getting Around

By Car

Rental cars offer the most freedom and flexibility for getting around. Several companies operate on all the major islands, and each chapter gives details on renting all types of transportation – cars, bikes, motorcycles.

However, consider the following before you opt to rent a vehicle here:

- Driving is UK-style, on the left side of the road.
- Rental cars have US-style right-hand drive, with the steering wheel on the left.

- Traffic can be heavy in the towns.
- Locals are known to turn without signaling and to stop without warning to greet friends.
- The one-way street system in Charlotte Amalie can be confusing.
- Roads often are narrow and winding, especially in the countryside.
- Many locals drive without insurance.

On the positive side, a valid driver's license from the US, Canada or the UK is good on the islands for 90 days, and most roads are paved and in fair to good condition. Be sure to wear a seat belt, stick to the 25-35 mph speed limit, and give two little beeps of the horn before rounding a blind curve.

Island Driving Signals

- Two quick beeps of the horn mean: *thanks*; *hi*; *go ahead*; *I'm passing*; or *watch out, I'm just around the curve.*
- A flash of the headlights means: *go ahead, I'll wait.*
- One long blast of the horn means: *get out of the way*; *hurry up*; *don't drive like a tourist.*

By Taxi

The Virgin Islands Taxi Commission sets standard rates for point-to-point trips on the islands. However, taxis are not metered, so visitors should ask about rates before they get into the vehicle. Charges vary with the number of passengers, and drivers add additional fees for luggage and trips between midnight and six am.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you have questions or problems concerning taxi service or a specific cab driver, contact the* ***Taxi Commission*** *weekdays from 8 am to 5 pm at ☎ 340-776-8294.*

By Bus

Limited public bus service is available on St. Thomas and St. Croix. While the routes aren't structured for tourist travel, you can easily get to several major destinations.

On St. Thomas, air-conditioned VITRAN buses run regular routes from the airport to Charlotte Amalie about every 45 minutes from 6 am until 9:30 pm. These city buses also provide service in the downtown area and to the shopping center at Tutu Mall. The charge is 75¢. The country buses ($1) travel round-trip from Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook on the east coast and Bordeaux on the west coast between 5:30 am and 8:30 pm.

On St. Croix, VITRAN buses mostly stick to the residential areas, but visitors can travel between the major towns of Christiansted and Frederiksted for $1 per trip. For schedules and information, contact **VITRAN,** ☎ 774-5678 (on St. Thomas); ☎ 773-1290 (St. Croix).

> **AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *See "Getting Around" in each island's chapter for taxi and car rental companies, sample rates and contact information.*

Accommodations

The larger US and British Virgin Islands offer a number of lodging choices from camping to all-inclusive luxury resorts. Many options are detailed in the *Where to Stay* section of each island, but a few generalities apply:

- Most hotels discount rooms from mid-April through mid-December, with the lowest rates available during the summer months.
- Small establishments may close annually during off-peak months, and larger hotels often schedule renovations at that time.
- New resorts frequently run tempting specials to bring in guests.
- Government taxes and service charges will be added to quoted prices unless specifically stated otherwise.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART	
The following price scale is used as a guideline for rates charged for a double room per night. All prices are given in US dollars.	
$	$50 or less
$$	$51-$100
$$$	$101-$175
$$$$	More than $175

Dining

People can eat well in the Virgin Islands. The land and sea produce a bounty of fresh foods that are flavored with island spices and cooked with West Indian flair. Fast-food restaurants supply plenty of burgers and fried chicken. Near-perfect weather makes it possible for restaurants to offer open-air seating, and many sit right on the water. Unusual island specialties include:

- **fungi** (pronounced foon-GEE), a seasoned cornmeal-and-okra dumpling
- **kallaloo** or callaloo, soup made with a vegetable similar to spinach
- **gunga**, a type of pea that is often mixed with rice
- **souse**, a lime-flavored stew made with the head, tail and feet of a pig
- **maubi**, a drink made from tree bark and ginger root

More recognizable island dishes include curried goat, fresh fish cooked a multitude of ways, johnnycakes (fried bread dough) and sweet potato pie. Many hotel restaurants serve a West Indian buffet once a week with live entertainment. This is an excellent opportunity to sample several unfamiliar dishes at one meal.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Most restaurants in large towns accept major credit cards, but local cafés may not. On smaller islands and in the countryside, expect to pay cash.*

The *Where to Eat* section of each island chapter suggests the best eateries in a variety of price ranges and a selection of specialties.

DINING PRICE CHART	
The following price scale is used as a guideline for the average cost of dinner for one including appetizer, main dish and dessert. Drinks, tax and gratuities are extra.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-$20
$$$	$21-$35
$$$$	More than $35

Money Matters

The US dollar is the official currency on all the US and British Virgin Islands. Travelers' checks are widely accepted and easily cashed at banks, but large denominations may present a problem elsewhere. Most large hotels, shops and restaurants on the main islands accept major credit cards. However, most gas stations require cash, and many of the smaller islands are not set up to accept credit cards.

Time

All the Virgin Islands are on Atlantic Standard Time, which is four hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time and one hour later than Eastern Standard Time. The islands do not observe daylight savings time.

Taxes

The British Virgin Islands charge a $10 departure tax for visitors leaving by air and a $5 departure tax for those leaving by sea. A $5

departure tax is included in airline ticket prices to the US Virgin Islands, and no additional tax is charged for departure by sea.

Hotels add a 7% tax to rooms in the BVI and an 18% tax to rooms in the USVI. In addition, a 10% service charge is added to BVI room rates, and USVI hotels may add a 3% energy charge.

The US Virgin Islands

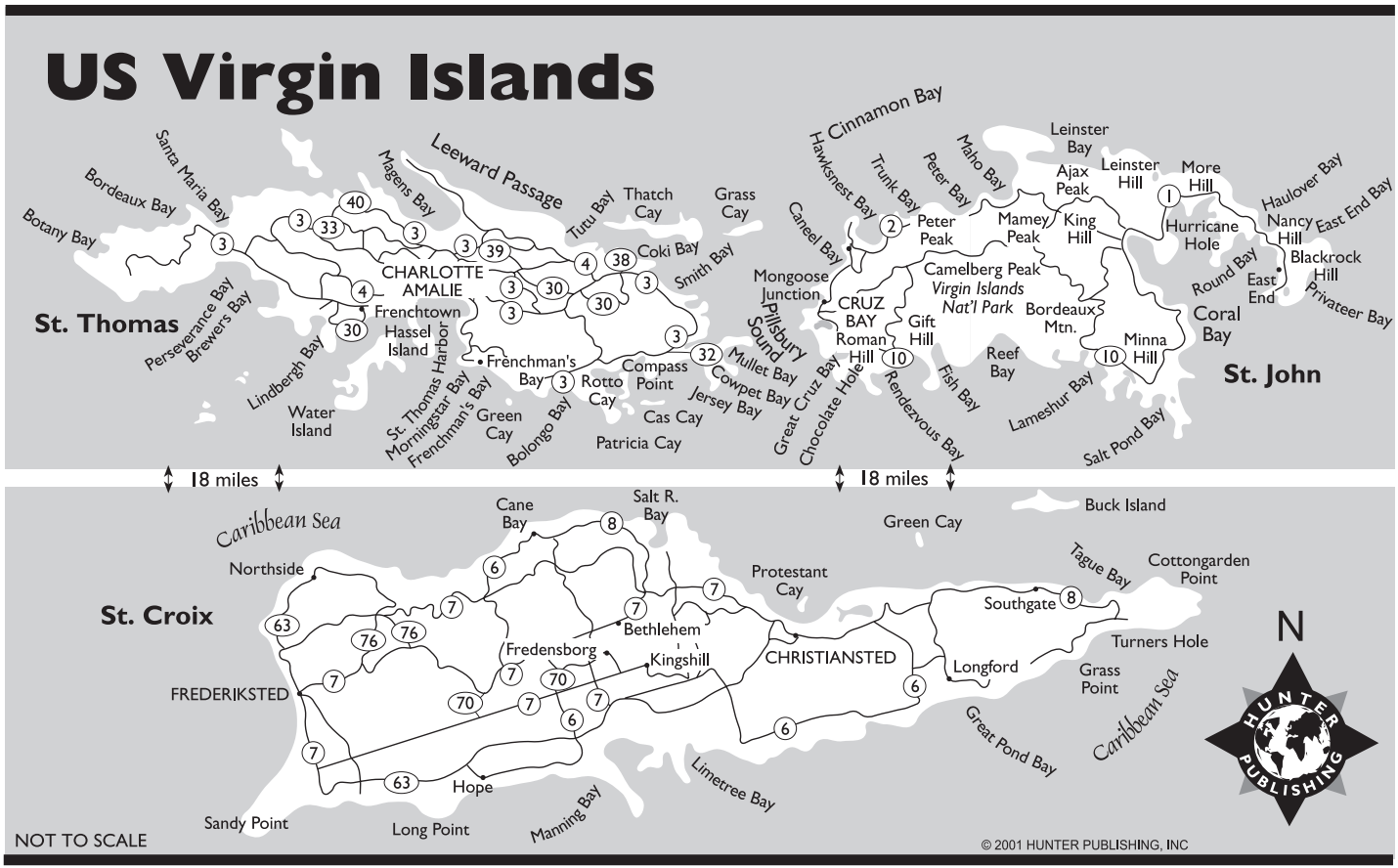
It's easy to love the US Virgin Islands. **St. Thomas**, **St. John** and **St. Croix** have all the amenities and indulgences you'd expect to find in a tropical paradise, plus a breathtaking Caribbean setting and just enough "foreign" quirks to convince you that you've left the mainland.

Menus are written in English, but the choices are exotically West Indian. Traffic travels on the left side of the road, but cars have state-side-designed steering. Mocko jumbies march in the Fourth of July parades, and you'll pay US dollars for locally made Africa-inspired art sold from an 18th-century Danish warehouse.

Together, the 60 or so islands and cays in the USVI offer something for every type of vacationer. The small outer islets are mostly uninhabited and appeal to day-trippers in search of lazy hours under a palm tree on a secluded beach. Each of the main islands have enough differences to make them interesting destinations on their own. **St. John** lures nature lovers, **St. Thomas** draws high-energy shoppers and *doers*, and **St. Croix** attracts those who relish a bit more history and architecture with their sun and fun.

St. Thomas and St. John are separated by a two-mile gap of water called **Pillsbury Sound.** Most of the other volcanic islets and cays that make up the unincorporated US territory are clustered nearby, and the British Virgin Islands begin just a few miles to the east. St. Croix, the largest US Virgin, is isolated 40 miles to the south.

> **TAKE NOTE:** *The area code for all of the US Virgin Islands is 340. Use it the same way you would a regular state-side area code.*


US Virgin Islands
St. Thomas
St. John
St. Croix
CHARLOTTE AMALIE
Frenchtown
Hassel Island
Water Island
Frenchman's Bay
Compass Point
Rotto Cay
Cas Cay
Patricia Cay
Green Cay
Thatch Cay
Grass Cay
Coki Bay
Smith Bay
Tutu Bay
Magens Bay
Leeward Passage
Santa Maria Bay
Bordeaux Bay
Botany Bay
Perseverance Bay
Brewers Bay
Lindbergh Bay
St. Thomas Harbor
Morningstar Bay
Frenchman's Bay
Bolongo Bay
Mullet Bay
Cowpet Bay
Jersey Bay
Great Cruz Bay
Chocolate Hole
Pillsbury Sound
Mongoose Junction
CRUZ BAY
Roman Hill
Gift Hill
Caneel Bay
Hawksnest Bay
Trunk Bay
Peter Bay
Maho Bay
Cinnamon Bay
Peter Peak
Mamey Peak
Camelberg Peak
Virgin Islands Nat'l Park
Bordeaux Mtn.
Reef Bay
Fish Bay
Rendezvous Bay
Lameshur Bay
Salt Pond Bay
Leinster Bay
Ajax Peak
Leinster Hill
More Hill
King Hill
Hurricane Hole
Haulover Bay
Nancy Hill
East End Bay
Blackrock Hill
Privateer Bay
Round Bay
East End
Coral Bay
Minna Hill
18 miles
18 miles
Caribbean Sea
Cane Bay
Salt R. Bay
Northside
Protestant Cay
Green Cay
Buck Island
Tague Bay
Cottongarden Point
Southgate
Turners Hole
Grass Point
Longford
Bethlehem
Fredensborg
Kingshill
CHRISTIANSTED
FREDERIKSTED
Great Pond Bay
Caribbean Sea
Limetree Bay
Hope
Sandy Point
Long Point
Manning Bay
NOT TO SCALE
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

St. Thomas

Overview

Forty-four beaches ring the 32-square-mile island of St. Thomas, and a 1,500-foot-high mountain ridge runs down its 13-mile length. Although it's the most developed of the Virgin Islands, you're never far from pristine white sand, spacious green hills and endless turquoise-blue water.

The bustling capital of **Charlotte Amalie** (ah-MAHL-iya) is teeming with duty-free shops, upscale restaurants, trendy nightclubs and lovely old Danish buildings with graceful arches and shaded courtyards. A gondola transports visitors into the hills above the city for killer views of the harbor and surrounding countryside, and the *Reefer* ferry whisks passengers from town to nearby **Morningstar Beach**.

Good roads circle the island and cut across interior hills for easy access to major sites such as glorious **Magen's Bay**, considered one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, and **Coral World** at **Coki Point**, where visitors view an underwater reef without getting wet.

Outside the capital, St. Thomas is relatively peaceful, but homes and businesses spread in every direction. Only the rugged western end remains primarily undeveloped. Most of the luxury resorts and large hotels are located along the eastern coast, and many of the best restaurants and bars are found at **Red Hook** and **Frenchtown**, a neighborhood on Charlotte Amalie's west end.

The northern side of St. Thomas is wetter and greener, with giant ferns growing up under tall banana trees and flowering poincianas. On the drier south side, bougainvillea and hibiscus bushes produce colorful blooms, and succulents such as aloe grow up the hillsides. Beautiful beaches, some with facilities and watersport rentals, are found on almost every stretch of coastline.

A Brief History

Christopher Columbus, backed by the rich coffers of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, sighted and named "San Tomas" on his second voyage in 1493. Over the next century, various European governments attempted to set up permanent colo-

nies and buccaneers hid out on the island, but St. Thomas did not have a permanent settlement until 1671, when the Danish West India Company arrived with a detailed plan for laying out a town around the island's natural harbor.

The city these Danes built turned out to be a masterpiece of indestructible buildings and beautifully terraced hillsides. But there were problems in the beginning. The grid-like design that looked great on paper became a technical nightmare when workers tried to build it on the island's hilly terrain. You'll experience the resourceful solution when you trudge up the numerous steps connecting parallel streets throughout the capital city.

Fine colonial buildings still stand in the city because they are constructed of local volcanic stone called blue bitch. Homes, churches, forts and warehouses built with this incredibly hard material have survived centuries of hurricanes and fires. Today, many are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, some house trendy restaurants and duty-free shops, others serve as museums, hotels or government offices.

The Great Free Port

The Danes named the city Charlotte Amalie after their king's consort and maintained control of the island, with only brief interference from rival nations, until it was purchased by the United States in 1917. While Charlotte Amalie was an excellent center for commerce because of its harbor, most of the countryside was too hilly for agriculture. A few plantation owners managed to grow adequate tobacco and sugar crops, but the island's most successful venture was trade, and Denmark declared St. Thomas a duty-free port in 1724.

Because of the free port and Danish neutrality during European wars, St. Thomas flourished as a commercial center and slave market for all the Caribbean. Slavery was abolished in 1848, but most of the island's current residents trace their ancestry back to Africa.

Remnants of Denmark's 200-year rule are visible all over the island. Streets have names such as Droningens Gade and Kongens Gade. Houses and churches retain their colorful architecture. **Fort Christian** still stands beside the harbor. **Bluebeard's Castle** and **Blackbeard's Castle** are nestled into the hills above the capital.

The auction blocks at **Market Square**, where slaves were once sold, have been turned into stalls for selling local produce and spices. Out-

side the city, **Drake's Seat**, said to be a lookout point for the famous seaman, Sir Frances Drake, is the perfect spot for viewing Magens Bay.

For years after the United States bought the eastern Virgin Islands, the territory was primarily a military holding. In the 1960's a few resorts were built, commercial airlines began direct flights, and St. Thomas enjoyed a tourist boom. Today, tourism dominates the island, and visitors are welcomed with warm smiles and friendly greetings by locals who are truly glad to see them.

Getting There

Most visitors arrive by plane, but there is also excellent ferry and hydrofoil service.

By Air

If you fly to St. Thomas, you'll land at modern **Cyril E. King International Airport**, three miles west of Charlotte Amalie. **American Airlines** (☎ 800-433-7300) has flights from Miami and New York; **Delta Air Lines** (☎ 800-325-1999) provides service from Atlanta; **USAir** (☎ 800-428-4322) flies from Philadelphia; **United** (☎ 800-241-6522) has flights from Washington DC and Chicago; and **Continental** (☎ 800-523-3273) goes nonstop from Newark. Many other US carriers fly from gateway cities to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where commuter airlines connect to St. Thomas. Canadians and Europeans have a choice of flying through a gateway in the United States or connecting to a commuter airline in Puerto Rico, St. Martin or Antigua.

Tourist information kiosks are located near the baggage claim and car rental area. Taxis, ranging from subcompacts to open-air buses, meet all flights, and fares to hotels are regulated. Expect to pay about $4 per person to locations near Charlotte Amalie and about $6 per person to east end hotels. An additional 75¢ is charged for each piece of luggage. If you prefer the bus, VITRAN picks up about every 20 minutes from the posted stop outside the terminal. Be sure to have the exact $1 fare, because drivers often don't have change.

By Seaplane & Hydrofoil

Seaborne Aviation (☎ 888-FLY-TOUR or 340-777-4491 or 340-773-6442; e-mail SeaborneAssist@hotmail.com) offers frequent seaplane

flights from the harbor at Charlotte Amalie to the harbor at Christiansted. If you're coming from the British Virgin Islands, Seaborne flies from the ferry terminal in West End, Tortola to Charlotte Amalie.

Virgin Hydrofoil Services (☎ 776-7417) operates the ***Katrun II*** between Charlotte Amalie and Christiansted, St. Croix, Friday through Monday. The 40-mile trip takes an hour and 15 minutes, and one-way tickets cost $45. Morning and afternoon departures from each island are convenient for both day-trippers and over-nighters.

By Cruise Ship

More cruise ships stop in St. Thomas than any other island in the Caribbean. It's not unusual to see five large ships in the Charlotte Amalie harbor at one time, which explains why the little town is sometimes described as overcrowded. Small ships can dock right at King Wharf on the city's waterfront. A few super-sized ships must tender passengers to town, but the majority of the larger ships pull up to the modern deepwater West Indian Docks on the east side of the capital. Stores have sprung up nearby, but most visitors take a taxi the mile or two into the center of town to shop and sightsee. Others opt for an island tour with a private guide or group-tour operator.

Taxis and minibuses continuously travel to and from the port when ships are docked, and the quick ride into town costs about $2.50 per person. Trips to sites around the island are in the $7 to $12 range, and drivers have a copy of regulated fares. Private guides offer two-hour island tours for about $15 per person, and prefer groups of two to four.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *While some price negotiation is worthwhile if you're using a taxi guide, it's more important to ask about the guide's experience and knowledge of island history (or whatever your field of interest is). Personality should also be taken in consideration before you climb into the car.*

Getting Around

By Car

If you're going to be on the island for more than a few days, consider renting a car. It's possible to get around by taxi and, to a limited extent, by public bus, but a car allows you the freedom to go anywhere at any time. A valid driver's license from home is all you need.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Remember, islanders drive on the left and are usually aggressive, with little regard for space constraints on the narrow roads. Most visitors from right-hand-drive countries quickly adapt.*

National and local companies rent compact cars for around $40 per day or $235 per week. Jeeps run about $60 per day. Check with your travel agent, airline and hotel about special package deals. Most major rental companies have pick-up facilities at the airport as well as at offices around the island. Some will arrange to meet you at the cruise-ship pier or your hotel, but during peak demand periods, service is known to be unreliable.

When reserving a car, consider weather and driving conditions on the island. An open-air five-speed jeep sounds like fun, but when the temperature and humidity are high, and the roads are steep and winding, you're going to want an air-conditioned automatic that can be locked up tight when you leave it parked in an isolated spot.

RENTAL CAR AGENCIES	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084 or 774-1468
Budget	☎ 800-626-4516 or 776-5774; www.budgetstt.com
Dependable	☎ 800-522-3076 or 774-2253
Discount	☎ 776-4858; www.discountcar.vi
E-Z	☎ 800-524-202 or 7775-6255; e-mail ezcar@viaccess.net
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3131 or 774-0841 or 774-1879
National	☎ 776-3616
VI	☎ 776-3616

By Taxi

Multi-destination taxi vans wait for passengers outside the airport terminal. If you prefer a private taxi, make arrangements in advance or call one of the services listed below as soon as you land. Taxi, minibus and open-air jitney service is available at the ship docks. Rates are regulated and based on destination, rather than distance. Drivers usually carry a copy of point-to-point rate sheets, and you should confirm the price before you enter the cab or bus.

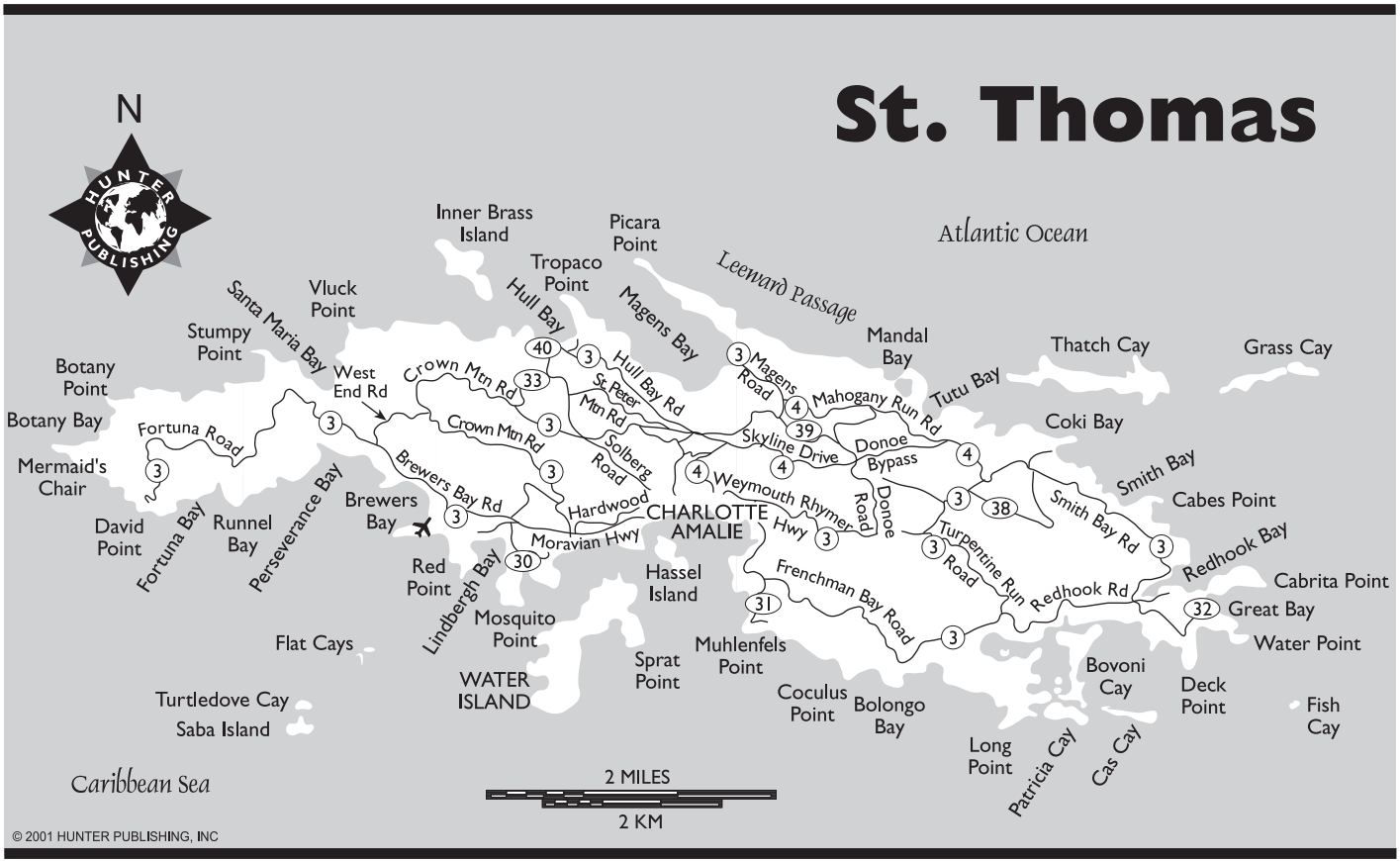
> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *A few drivers may try to charge the single-person rate for each passenger, but the Commission sets lower charges for additional passengers traveling to the same destination. Be sure to ask for the better rate.*

It's common practice for a driver to fill his vehicle before leaving, so look for one that's almost full to avoid a wait. Even at hotels this practice is common. Occupy the time chatting with the driver. Chances are, you'll pick up some good tips or learn about a new entertainment spot.

> *Ride only in taxis with a dome light and the letters TP on their license plate. Other cabs are not official and do not abide by the Taxi Commission guidelines and rates.*

You may call for a private cab to pick you up anywhere on the island. The dispatcher will give you the license number of the cab being sent for you, so there will be no mix-up about the arrangements. It's always a good idea to jot down the number so you can report lost items or unprofessional service to the Taxi Commission ☎ 776-8294.

TAXI COMPANIES	
East End	☎ 888-484-TAXI (888-484-8294), 775-6974
Independent	☎ 775-1006, 776-1669
Islander	☎ 800-524-2017,774-4077, fax 777-8188
Sunflower	☎ 777-7343
VI Radio Dispatch	☎ 774-7457
VI Taxi Association	☎ 774-4550
Wheatley	☎ 775-1959


St. Thomas
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Inner Brass Island
Picara Point
Tropaco Point
Atlantic Ocean
Leeward Passage
Vluck Point
Santa Maria Bay
Stumpy Point
Hull Bay
Magens Bay
Mandal Bay
Thatch Cay
Grass Cay
Botany Point
Botany Bay
West End Rd
Crown Mtn Rd
Hull Bay Rd
St. Peter Mtn Rd
Magens Road
Mahogany Run Rd
Tutu Bay
Coki Bay
Fortuna Road
Solberg Road
Skyline Drive
Donoe Bypass
Mermaid's Chair
Brewers Bay Rd
Weymouth Rhymer Hwy
Donoe Road
Smith Bay
Cabes Point
David Point
Fortuna Bay
Runnel Bay
Perseverance Bay
Brewers Bay
Hardwood
CHARLOTTE AMALIE
Moravian Hwy
Smith Bay Rd
Redhook Bay
Red Point
Lindbergh Bay
Hassel Island
Turpentine Run
Redhook Rd
Cabrita Point
Great Bay
Frenchman Bay Road
Mosquito Point
Flat Cays
Muhlenfels Point
Water Point
Sprat Point
WATER ISLAND
Bovoni Cay
Deck Point
Turtledove Cay
Saba Island
Coculus Point
Bolongo Bay
Fish Cay
Long Point
Patricia Cay
Cas Cay
Caribbean Sea
2 MILES
2 KM
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

St. Thomas

By Bus

Air-conditioned (☎ 774-5678) buses travel the streets of Charlotte Amalie and connect the town with the airport, Red Hook and Bordeaux. In-town buses run from 6:15 am to 10:15 pm and charge 75¢ per passenger. Country buses run from 5:30 am to 8:30 pm and charge $1 per passenger. Open-air jitneys leave Market Square for Red Hook every hour and charge $3. Plan to have the exact fare, since many drivers don't carry or won't give change.

By Ferry

A ferry known as ***The Reefer*** runs from the waterfront in Charlotte Amalie, across from the Rolex shop, to Marriott's Frenchman's Reef Hotel on Morningstar Beach between 8:30 am and 5 pm, Monday through Saturday. The fare is $4 each way and the ferry leaves from town every hour on the hour and from the hotel at half past every hour. On Sundays, the schedule reverses, and the ferry departs from the hotel on the hour and from town on the half-hour with the first trip at 9 am and the last at 4:30 pm. ☎ 776-8500, ext. 445.

It's also possible to go by ferry from Charlotte Amalie to St. John and Tortola. The current schedule is published in *St. Thomas This Week* and posted at the ferry dock and marine terminal on the waterfront in town. You may also call **Transportation Services**, ☎ 776-6282, for information about service to St. John, or contact **Smith's Ferry,** ☎ 775-7292, or **Native Son,** ☎ 774-8685, for the schedule to Tortola.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Remember, unless you're a British citizen, you must have a passport or a notarized birth certificate and picture identification to enter and return from Tortola in the British Virgin Islands.*

The ***Katrun II*** hydrofoil, ☎ 776-7417, travels between Charlotte Amalie and Christiansted, St. Croix, Friday through Monday. **Seaborne Aviation** (☎ 888-FLY-TOUR or 340-777-4491 or 340-773-6442) offers frequent seaplane flights from the harbor at Charlotte Amalie to the St. Croix and Tortola. (See information above.)

The east-end town of Red Hook is separated from Cruz Bay, St. John by only three miles of water. Ferries travel back and forth daily, leaving Red Hook at 6:30 am and 7:30 am, then hourly from 8 am until midnight. Return boats leave Cruz Bay every hour from 6 am until 11 pm.

The trip takes only 20 minutes, and the one-way fare is $3 for adults and $1 for children under 12. For information, contact **Transportation Services**, ☎ 776-6282.

Ferry service is also available from Red Hook to Tortola, Jost Van Dyke, and Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands. Ticket kiosks are set up at the harbor in Red Hook, and everyone except British citizens must have a passport or a notarized birth certificate and picture identification to enter and return from the British Virgin Islands.

FERRY SERVICE	
SERVICE	**OPERATORS**
RED HOOK - TORTOLA $40 round-trip; 45 mins.	***Native Son***, ☎ 774-8685 **Smith's Ferry**, ☎ 775-7292
RED HOOK - JOST VAN DYKE Friday-Sunday only; reservations required; $40 round-trip; 45 mins.	**Inter-Island**, ☎ 776-6597
RED HOOK - VIRGIN GORDA Thursday & Sunday only; reservations required; $40 round-trip; 1hr 45 mins.	**Transportation Services** ☎ 776-6282

Smith's Ferry, ☎ 775-7292, offers a special ticket on Saturdays that includes a three-hour stop on Tortola and a four-hour stop on Virgin Gorda for $60 round-trip. Call in advance for times and reservations.

If you want to take your car over to St. John, **Boyson**, ☎ 776-6294, and **Republic Barge**, ☎ 779-4000, run frequent service from the harbor at Red Hook. Passengers are allowed to travel with their vehicles for a total cost of $40 round-trip.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Be aware that some car rental agencies require customers to sign a contract stating they will not take their car off St. Thomas. If you plan to do so, check around for an agency that allows it.*

■ Touring the Island

Guided Tours

Consider seeing Charlotte Amalie with a guide who can fill you in on all types of legends and facts about the old harbor town.

Yesterday St. Thomas has a 3½-hour tour which includes a ride up Blackbeard's Hill and a walk through the city. The cost is $35 for adults and $17.50 for children. ☎ 775-2118.

Cindy Born, an energetic and knowledgeable guide, leads groups on a 2½-hour walking tour of historic sites each weekday morning. You don't need a reservation – just show up at the entrance to Fort Christian by 9:30 Monday through Friday. Be sure to wear a comfortable pair of shoes. Cost is $20 per adult, $15 for students, and kids under 15 walk free when accompanied by a parent. Cindy also will do a 12:30 weekday or Saturday tour if at least three people call ahead to request it. Bring cash or traveler's checks. ☎ 714-1672.

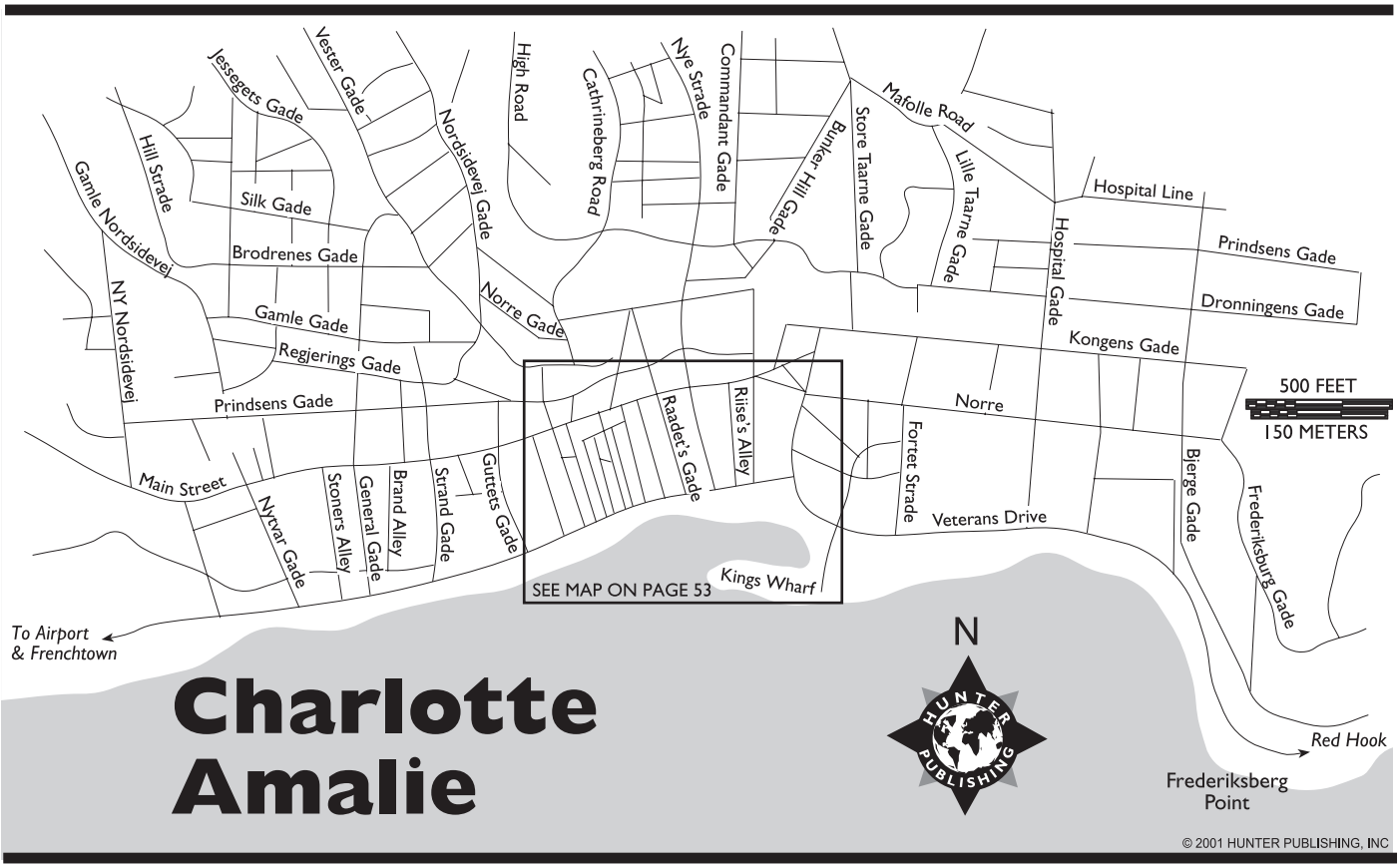
Charlotte Amalie Walks will take you through historic downtown with stops at all the major sites. You must reserve in advance, then show up in front of the Liberty Bell in Emancipation Garden at 9 am. The two-hour tour costs $25 for an English-speaking guide and $35 for those who prefer Spanish, Japanese or German. ☎ 777-8708.

Self-Guided Tours

A Walking Tour of Charlotte Amalie

The capital of St. Thomas and the US Virgin Islands is best seen on foot. You can spend all day and most of the night sightseeing, shopping, dining and bar-hopping without driving or hailing a cab. If you become tired or overloaded with purchases, a cab or open-air jitney bus is always nearby. The entire town is listed in the National Register of Historic Places because of its 300-year history and thick-walled Danish architecture.

Begin your walking tour at **Fort Christian.** The red brick structure, which was named for Denmark's King Christian V, sits near the waterfront on the east end of town, across from the Vendors' Plaza on Veterans Highway (Waterfront Drive). If you have a car, park in the large public lot on the east side of the fort off Fortet Strade. Parking fees run


Charlotte Amalie
Vester Gade
Jessegets Gade
Nordsidevej Gade
High Road
Cathrineberg Road
Nye Strade
Commandant Gade
Bunker Hill Gade
Store Taarne Gade
Mafolle Road
Lille Taarne Gade
Hospital Line
Hospital Gade
Prindsens Gade
Dronningens Gade
Kongens Gade
Norre
Norre Gade
Hill Strade
Silk Gade
Brodrenes Gade
Gamle Gade
Regjerings Gade
Gamle Nordsidevej
NY Nordsidevej
Prindsens Gade
Main Street
Nyvar Gade
Stoners Alley
General Gade
Brand Alley
Strand Gade
Gutters Gade
Raadet's Gade
Riise's Alley
Fortet Strade
Veterans Drive
Bjerge Gade
Frederiksburg Gade
SEE MAP ON PAGE 53
Kings Wharf
To Airport & Frenchtown
500 FEET
150 METERS
N
Red Hook
Frederiksberg Point
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

50¢ per hour or $4 per day from 6 am to 6 pm weekdays. On weekends and evenings, parking is free.

Fort Christian was constructed between 1666 and 1671 by Danish settlers and is the oldest building still in use in the Virgin Islands. The structure was intended to defend the harbor, but in the early years, it also served as the seat of government, a meeting hall and a church. Later, it became a jail, and today the dungeon houses **The Virgin Islands Museum**.

Each room in the museum focuses on a period of the islands' history and various displays depict the region's culture, plants, wildlife and art. A gift shop, located in an area that once served as the police station, sells books, maps and souvenirs. The museum is open 8:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. ☎ 776-4566.

It's impossible to miss the bright green **Legislative Building** with the red roof southeast of the fort on Veterans Highway (Waterfront). The Virgin Islands Senate conducts sessions in the upstairs chamber. Those interested in the territory's politics are invited to sit in. Danish colonists built the two-story structure in Italian Renaissance style around 1874 to house the police force. After the US bought the islands in 1917, the Marine Corps moved in and the building was later used as a school. Open to the public weekdays from 8 am until 5 pm, ☎ 774-0880.

When you leave the Legislative Building, walk west, past the fort, to the **Vendors' Plaza,** across from the waterfront. You can buy all sorts of merchandise from the open-air stalls covered by colorful umbrellas, but the best buys are local arts and crafts. Directly north of the plaza, you'll find a park that originally served as the town square. Now, it is known as **Emancipation Garden** in remembrance of July 3, 1848, when Governor Peter von Scholten announced the end of slavery in the islands. The garden's gazebo is often the site of public ceremonies and office workers take their lunch break in the small park.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Restrooms and pay phones are located at the Hospitality Lounge (Monday-Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm) on Talbod Gade, across from the southwest corner of Emancipation Park. The Tourist Information Office is farther south, toward the waterfront, on the first floor of the old Customs Building.*

The oldest church on the island is located north of Emancipation Garden, two blocks east of the post office, at 7 Norre Gade (Main Street). Lutheran is the official religion of Denmark, and **Frederick Lutheran Church** was built in the Gothic Revival style in 1820 to replace the church's original sanctuary that burned. A massive altar made of local mahogany dominates the interior of the brick structure. The church's treasures include a gold-plated silver chalice that was given to the congregation by Danish royalty in 1713. Services are held at 8 am and 10:30 am each Sunday, but the church doors are open Monday through Saturday from 8 am until 5 pm, ☎ 776-1315.

Continue your walking tour by heading north toward **Government Hill** and the famous **99 Steps**. Steep stairs are built into the hillsides all over town to connect parallel streets, but this set leading up from Kongens Gade (King Street) is the most renowned.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** *99 Steps really has 103 steps. No one seems to know why they are known by a lesser number, but you won't care once you start climbing!*

Several interesting sites are located on Government Hill near the 99 Steps. At the bottom, to your left as you face the stairs, take the time to admire the Spanish-style iron work and coral-colored walls of **Hotel 1829**, which was built as a guest house by a Frenchman named Lavalette in, of course, 1829. You can enjoy a gourmet meal on the terrace with a fantastic view of the town and harbor. The indoor bar was originally part of the kitchen and features 200-year-old tiles from Morocco.

Government House is on the east side of the 99 Steps, to your right as you face the stairs. It's an elegant three-story structure built between 1865 and 1867, which now serves as offices for the governor of the US Virgin Islands. The ground floor is open to visitors and features local mahogany staircases and various historical paintings. If you wish to see the reception rooms on the second floor, call ahead for an appointment or locate one of the officials and ask for a tour after you arrive. Upstairs, you'll see a lovely ballroom, some small paintings by Camille Pissarro (who was born on St. Thomas in 1830) and a gorgeous view of the harbor from the terrace. Government House is open free of charge Monday through Friday, 8 am to noon and 1 pm to 5 pm, ☎ 774-0001.

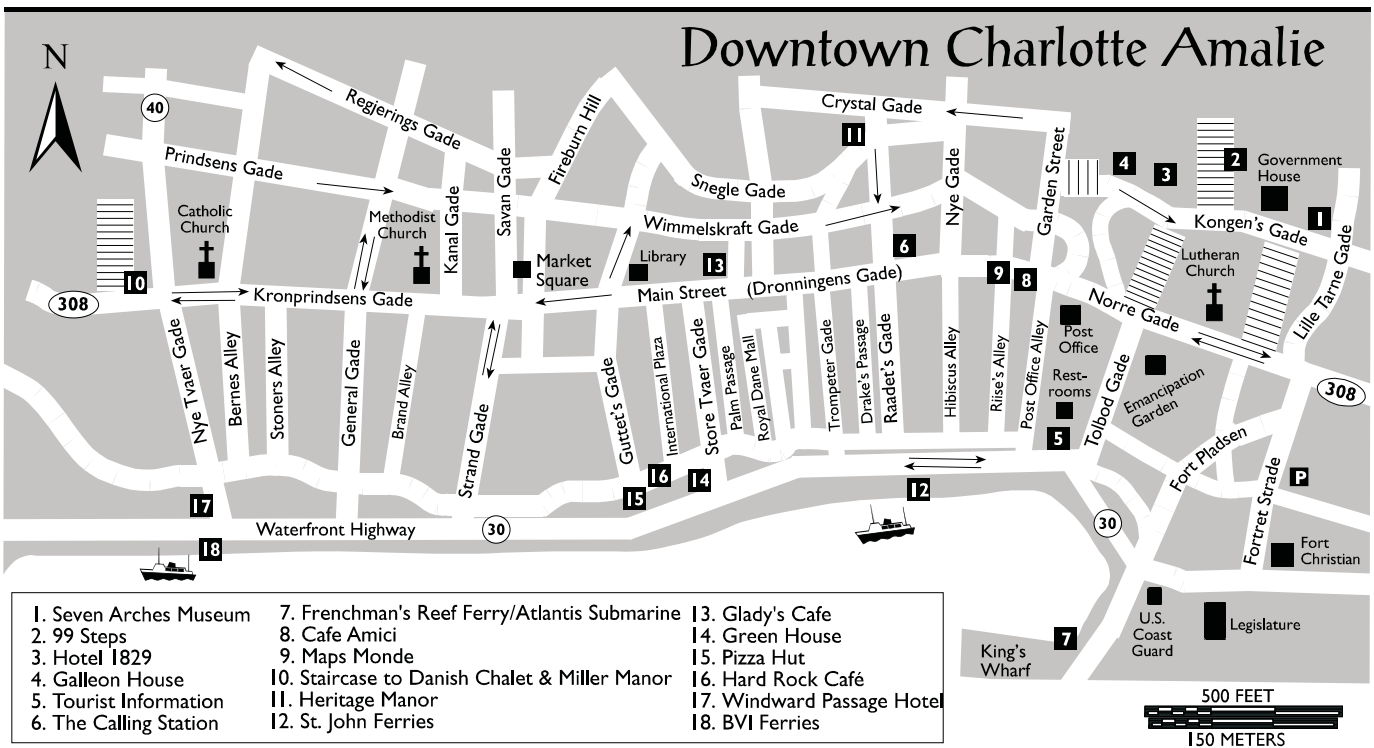
At the top of the 99 Steps you'll see a green gate that opens into the courtyard of **Haagensen House,** an early 19th-century mansion that recently has been restored by the owners of Hotel 1829. Inside, the furniture and decorations look as they did when the 11-member Haagensen family lived there. A detached kitchen sits behind the main house and labeled Caribbean plants grow in the terraced garden. The garden gift shop stocks souvenirs, rum and cigars, and an antique print gallery offers maps and photos. Open daily 9 am to 4 pm, admission to the house is $6 for adults and $3 for children and senior citizens, ☎ 774-9605.

Haagensen House sits on a hill dominated by **Fort Skytsborg**, better known as **Blackbeard's Tower.** The five-story tower was built in 1678 (well before any other structure still standing on the island) of native volcanic stone called blue bitch. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the tower is said to have been used as a lookout by Edward Teach, the infamous pirate known as Blackbeard. Today, a small hotel called Blackbeard's Castle surrounds the tower and a restaurant offers diners gourmet meals and dazzling views of the town and harbor. ☎ 776-1234.

If you have time to see yet another piece of Danish history and architecture, go back down to Kongens Gade (King Street) and turn east. A short distance past Government House you'll find an odd little place called **Seven Arches Museum** on a narrow alleyway behind the Lieutenant Governor's office. You must ring the bell on the iron gate for admission, because the couple who restored and run the museum live on the first floor of this 19th-century home. When you enter the house, built of ballast bricks from Denmark, you will see a fine collection of antique mahogany furniture. You'll be invited to enjoy a complimentary fruit punch in the original kitchen or out in the courtyard where iguanas roam about looking for hibiscus flowers to eat. A $5 donation is requested. The museum is open 10 am to 3 pm, Tuesday through Saturday. ☎ 774-9295.

The oldest synagogue in continuous use on US soil is located on the north side of a street named Crystal Gade. From Government Hill, walk west to a set of steps that lead down to Garden Street. Turn right and walk north a short distance to Crystal Gade.

The **Beracha Veshalom Vegmiluth Hasidim Synagogue** was completed in 1833 to replace two earlier temples that were built on the same spot by the Jewish community on St. Thomas. Sand on the floor of the stone and brick building symbolizes the Jews' exodus from Egypt and a time during the Inquisition when Spanish Jews were forced to


Downtown Charlotte Amalie
N
Regierings Gade
Prindsens Gade
Crystal Gade
Fireburn Hill
Savan Gade
Kanal Gade
Shegle Gade
Wimmelskraft Gade
Nye Gade
Garden Street
Government House
Kongen's Gade
Lutheran Church
Lille Tarne Gade
Norre Gade
Catholic Church
Methodist Church
Market Square
Library
Kronprindsens Gade
Main Street (Dronningens Gade)
Post Office
Rest-rooms
Tolbod Gade
Emancipation Garden
Fort Pladsen
Fortret Strade
Fort Christian
Nye Tvaer Gade
Bernes Alley
Stoners Alley
General Gade
Brand Alley
Strand Gade
Gutter's Gade
International Plaza
Store Tvaer Gade
Palm Passage
Royal Dane Mall
Trompeter Gade
Drake's Passage
Raadet's Gade
Hibiscus Alley
Riise's Alley
Post Office Alley
Waterfront Highway
King's Wharf
U.S. Coast Guard
Legislature
500 FEET
150 METERS
1. Seven Arches Museum
2. 99 Steps
3. Hotel 1829
4. Galleon House
5. Tourist Information
6. The Calling Station
7. Frenchman's Reef Ferry/Atlantis Submarine
8. Cafe Amici
9. Maps Monde
10. Staircase to Danish Chalet & Miller Manor
11. Heritage Manor
12. St. John Ferries
13. Glady's Cafe
14. Green House
15. Pizza Hut
16. Hard Rock Café
17. Windward Passage Hotel
18. BVI Ferries

St. Thomas

hide in unfinished basements. Furniture and most of the fixtures date from 1833, and the Holy Ark on the east wall hides six scrolls of the Torah, three of them over 200 years old. A small museum next to the synagogue covers the history of Jews on the island. You may visit the **Weibel Museum** Monday through Friday from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm, ☎ 774-4312. Sabbath services are held in the synagogue on Friday evenings and visitors are welcome there Monday through Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.

East of the synagogue, find Raadet's Gade and take it down the hill one block to Vimmelskaft Gade (Back Street). A right turn will take you west to **Market Square**, site of what was once the largest slave market in the West Indies. The old auction blocks are now covered by a metal roof that came from a 19th-century European railway station, and local vendors use the stalls to sell fruits and vegetables. This is a good place to find fresh-squeezed juices, coconuts that will be hacked open by a machete expert so you can drink the milk inside and colorful tie-dyed T-shirts. The market is busiest on Saturday mornings, the traditional market day.

The south side of the market is bordered by Dronningens Gade (Main Street), which you can take two blocks east to **Camille Pissarro's Birthplace** in the town's historic district**.** The Impressionist artist was born July 10, 1830, and lived on the second floor of the building at 14 Dronningens Gade for 12 years before moving to Paris. He died a Danish citizen in 1903. Pissarro left behind a collection of recently-discovered paintings of Caribbean life. The place where he lived on St. Thomas is now home to retail shops. However, one room of the building displays paintings by the artist and traveling exhibits are featured at various times. ☎ 774-4621.

The area between Dronningens Gade and the waterfront is a network of parallel alleys lined with historic warehouses that have been turned into attractive shops selling everything from imported luxury merchandise to local made crafts. If one or more jumbo ships are in port, expect the narrow passageways to be packed with bargain-hunting tourists. Escape the madness by taking the Marriott Frenchman's Reef Hotel Ferry from the waterfront (across from the Rolex store) to Morningstar Beach for a swim.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Consider seeing Charlotte Amalie with a guide who can fill you in on all types of legends and facts about the old harbor town.*

Yesterday St. Thomas has a 3½-hour tour that includes a ride up Blackbeard's Hill and a walk through the city. The cost is $35 for adults and $17.50 for children. ☎ 775-2118. **Cindy Born**, an energetic and knowledgeable guide, leads groups on a 2½-hour walking tour of historic sites each weekday morning. Simply show up at the entrance to Fort Christian by 9:30 Monday through Friday. Cost is $20 per adult, $15 for students, and kids under 15 walk free when accompanied by a parent. Cindy will do Saturday tours if there's enough interest. Payment is by cash or traveler's check. ☎ 714-1672.

Charlotte Amalie Walks offers a two-hour walk through historic downtown with stops at all the major sites. You must reserve in advance, then show up in front of the Liberty Bell in Emancipation Garden at 9 am. $25 for an English-speaking guide and $35 for guides speaking Spanish, Japanese or German. ☎ 777-8708.

Water Island & Hassel Island

Two tiny islands sit in the harbor directly across from Charlotte Amalie. **Hassel** is nearer and smaller, and most of its 135 acres belong to the Virgin Islands National Park (call their office at ☎ 775-6238 or 776-6201). Occasionally, a park ranger will lead a hike along the rugged trails that cut across the hills, but the Park Department has been slow about developing the land, and there is no regular boat service, so the island is pleasantly deserted most of the time.

If you want to go out there to poke around the old coal mine and naval shipyard, you'll have to rent your own boat or make transportation arrangements with one of the public ferryboats going to other locations. Try **Launch with Larry** at Crown Bay Marina (☎ 775-8071 or 779-6807) or ***The Reefer***, which travels from the Charlotte Amalie waterfront to Morningside Beach (☎ 776-8500, ext. 445).

Water Island is easier to access. This 492-acre islet is a half-mile or so from the St. Thomas shore, directly across from the marina at Crown Bay. **Launch with Larry** runs regular trips Monday through Saturday, from 6:45 am until 9 pm, and makes limited round-trips on Sundays between 8 am and 5 pm.

A Water Island Ferry Schedule is posted at Tickles Restaurant on the water at Crown Bay Marina. The one-way fare is $3 during the day and $5 in the evening. ☎ 775-8071, 775-8073 or 779-6807.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *The schedule is subject to change, so it's best to arrive at the marina with the idea that you may spend an hour or so at Tickles' bar waiting for departure time.*

Honeymoon Beach is the big draw on the two-mile-long island and most visitors are day-trippers who want to spend a few hours swimming and sunning in relative seclusion. The shady white-sand beach is an easy walk just a short distance down the road from the ferry dock. A beachside bar here serves drinks and snacks. **Limestone Bay**, on the east side of the island, is rocky and a longer hike up and over the hills from the ferry dock, but the snorkeling is good.

Bikers can take a three-hour tour with **Mountain Bike Tours of Water Island.** Riders pick up an 18-speed Cannondale mountain bike and head out to see the beaches and natural greenery on the island. Most of the riding is on paved roads over gentle hills. The $60 cost includes the round-trip ferry trip, helmets, water bottles and an informative guide. Call for information and reservations, ☎ 714-2186.

The only options for staying overnight are the 10 bargain-priced units at **Limestone Reef Terraces** and the three-bedroom **Murray House**. Contact Water Island Vacations for information and reservations at either property. ☎ 800-872-8784; fax 732-329-6919; www.nerc.com/~vacation; e-mail pmurray@nerc.com.

Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook

An end-to-end driving tour of St. Thomas will take you to scenic overlooks, superb beaches, interesting historical sites and unusual attractions. You'll be driving on the left side of the road (British style) in a car with left-side steering (American style), but you'll be surprised at how quickly you get the hang of it. This left-left system is especially beneficial when you're hugging the edge of one of the island's steep, winding roads.

Starting from Fort Christian on the eastern edge of Charlotte Amalie, head east on Veterans Highway (Route 30) toward the West Indian Company Dock, where most large cruise ships tie up. **Havensight Mall**, a 50-store complex selling many of the same goods found in the downtown shops, is adjacent to the dock, and **Paradise Point Tramway** is directly across the street. Tickets for Paradise Point Tramway are $12 per person, and it runs continuously from 9 am to 5 pm daily

during the November to April high season. It's closed on Tuesday and Saturday from May to October, ☎ 774-9809.

You can drive to the lookout at **Paradise Point** on top of **Flag Hill** by taking the road directly in front of the entrance to Havensight Mall**,** but the **Tramway's** modern Swiss-built gondola is an enjoyable alternative. The 700-foot ascent takes seven minutes, and you'll have a breathtaking view of Charlotte Amalie, the harbor, and nearby islands on the way up and from the observation deck at the top. Indoor shops sell a variety of island-style merchandise; snacks and drinks are available at the bar. A marginally interesting nature trail winds through the foliage on the peak, and a free tropical bird show takes place at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm daily. Even though the setting is an obvious "tourist trap," you should go for the views, which are especially spectacular at sunset.

Route 30 continues south a short distance then curves toward the east near the junction with Route 315, which leads to **Morningstar Beach**. If you're ready for a swim, detour toward this golden stretch of sand. Two recently renovated Marriott resorts – Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Beach – sit near the calm water, and you can rent sports equipment and lounge chairs from their vendors.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Cruise passengers often take* The Reefer *ferry from Charlotte Amalie to Morningstar to enjoy the beach, watersports and snack bars, so expect a crowd if ships are in port. At other times, the beach is relatively quiet, and a fine place to take a break while touring the island.*

Back on Route 30 traveling east from Morningstar, you'll notice secondary roads leading to south-shore beaches. At one point the main road dips south and passes directly in front of **Bolongo Bay** and its popular stretch of sand, then skirts the **Marine Sanctuary** at **Mangrove Lagoon**. (See *Adventures On Water*, page 76-77, for information about exploring the lagoon sanctuary by kayak.)

Route 30 ends at Route 32 just east of the lagoon, and a turn to the right will take you to **Red Hook**. This busy harbor town is the prime departure point for inter-island ferries, fishing boats and charter yachts. All types of marine-related businesses are located here, along with a variety of restaurants, bars and shops that line both sides of the main road.

Directly to the south of town, Route 322 (Route 317 on some maps) leads out to a small spit of land rimmed with some of the most spectacular bays and beaches on the island. Several hotels and restaurants cater to snorkelers, windsurfers and sailors who favor the fine sand and rolling surf of **Secret Harbour, Cowpet Beach** and **Great Bay**.

Red Hook to Magens Bay

North of Red Hook, Route 38 passes a lineup of some of the island's finest resorts with access to choice northeast beaches. Make a stop at **Kilnworks Pottery & Art Gallery** (see *Shopping* for more information) to browse among shelves full of top-quality pottery made by local artisans, then continue on to Route 388, which leads to **Coki Point** and **Coral World Marine Park and Observatory**.

CORAL WORLD

Don't make the mistake of dismissing this showy geodesic-domed complex as an overpriced tourist trap. It's not. The main observation room at Coral World is built 100 feet offshore directly over a coral reef. Even certified divers enjoy descending, dry and fully clothed, 15 feet into this underwater room to gaze at the profusion of sea creatures swimming and feeding in their natural habitat of sea plants and coral. Unlike traditional aquariums that exhibit a limited number of captured fish, Coral World's waterproof glass gives visitors a 360° view of marine creatures who are free to come and go as they please. A 50,000-gallon Predator Tank holds some of the fiercer critters, and you can watch as divers enter the tank to feed the adult sharks and eels.

Above ground is the Observatory Tower, which offers a stunning view of nearby islands, seabirds and, during the winter, migrating humpback whales. Elsewhere in the four-acre compound, individual pools contain young sharks, green sea turtles and stingrays. Twenty-one tanks in the Marine Gardens hold the most delicate marine species, such as seahorses and rare corals. A more diverse selection of exquisite marine life is housed in an 80,000-gallon tank at the Caribbean Reef Encounter.

In addition, take time to stroll along the Tropical Nature Trail that includes plants from the Caribbean's dry and wet zones, and peek through the underwater viewing window of the Mangrove Lagoon. You'll be intrigued by this look into the remarkable beauty and fragile balance of the Caribbean ecosystem.

Talks and feedings take place in various areas of the park between 9:45 am and 4 pm each day. The schedule changes occasionally, so call ahead if you're interested in a specific exhibit. Coral World is open daily, 9 am until 5 pm, during high season, and summer hours may vary. Ticket prices are $18 for adults and $9 for children, and discount coupons are available from the website and visitor publications. Route 388, Coki Point, St. Thomas. ☎ 775-1555; www.coralworldvi.com.

Coki Beach, adjacent to Coral World, is famous for excellent snorkeling and shore diving, and you can rent equipment from several waterside vendors. The beach itself is small and you should expect a crowd on weekends and days when cruise ships are docked in Charlotte Amalie. However, if you visit late in the day or off-season, you may have the whole place to yourself. (See *Beaches* and *Adventures On Water* for more information.)

Stop to chat with Mrs. Terry White at the vendor shack called **Island Toys**. She's an island celebrity who won the 1990 Smithsonian Folk Life Festival Award and has been featured in several publications. She's been selling T-shirts and sarongs from her roadside stall for more than 10 years, but her real talent is making one-of-a-kind folk-art dolls from scraps of fabric sent to her by fans in various parts of the world. Note the grave sites in the sandy lot between the road and the beach.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *While this isn't the most tranquil spot on the island, the view of nearby Thatch Cay is lovely, and the rolling surf sings a solicitous song after the crowds leave in the evening. It's a great place for night dives and romantic strolls.*

Back on Route 38, head west up the hill to Route 42, which parallels the scenic northeast shore and leads to Magens Bay Road (Route 35). The long, palm-lined, white-sand beach at **Magens Bay** is considered one of the most beautiful in the world. Nestled between lush green

hills, the two-mile-deep crescent-shaped bay offers incredible scenery, calm water for swimmers and a variety of amenities.

Just inland, acres of former plantation land surrounding the beach contain donkey paths, ruined mills and an arboretum of exotic trees. Arrive early or late in the day for the best chance of avoiding crowds of tourists. Unlike other beaches on the island, Magens charges a fee for admission and parking. It's $1 per vehicle, $1 per adult and 25¢ per child under 12. (See *Beaches* and *Adventures On Water* for more information.)

Above Magens Bay

From Magens Bay, go back along Route 35 to the junction with scenic **Skyline Drive** (Route 40) and the spectacular view from **Drake's Seat.** An actual stone seat is positioned on the hill above the road, and legend says that Sir Frances Drake used the spot as a lookout for Spanish ships approaching St. Thomas. Most tourists ignore the hilltop and cluster in the parking area with local vendors and a photo-op donkey to admire the stunning view of Magens Bay and offshore islands. Plan to visit late in the afternoon, just before sunset, to enjoy the panorama in solitude.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If "Nora's Truck" is parked beside the road at Drake's Seat, try one of the made-to-order fruit smoothies.*

Follow Route 40 west as it becomes St. Peter Mountain Road. Make a stop at **Fairchild Park**, where you'll have more stunning views. This small, wooded, mountaintop retreat is named for Arthur Fairchild, a wealthy publisher and philanthropist who donated Magens Bay and its adjacent acreage to the public in 1950. Try to visit on a clear day when you'll have a 360° panoramic view of St. Thomas, including the north and south coasts, and neighboring islands. It's much quieter at Fairchild Park than at Drake's Seat, and you most likely will have an entire park bench to yourself.

Next, stop at **Estate St. Peter Greathouse and Botanical Gardens.** Again, the mountaintop views are breathtaking. The estate sits on land that was part of Plantation St. Peter during the 19th century. Records show that in 1938 Lawrence W. Cramer, then governor of the USVI, bought the property from a man named Thomas Berry for a mere $400. During the 1960s, the Johnson & Johnson Corporation purchased the estate for a retreat center and later sold it to Sylvie and

Howard DeWolfe, who began developing the botanical gardens. Hurricane Hugo demolished the property in September 1989, but the estate was rebuilt immediately.

Allow time to see the luxurious Greathouse, which exhibits an excellent collection of local art. From the observation deck you can gaze at the panoramic view and then stroll along the labeled nature trails that wind through beautifully landscaped gardens. Admission to the estate on St. Peter Mountain Road (Route 40) is $8 for adults and $2 for students, Open Monday through Saturday, 9 am to 3 pm, ☎ 774-4999; fax 774-1723; www.greathouse-mountaintop.com.

At the risk of sensory overload, make one more scenic stop at **Mountain Top.** Ignore the tourist-trap packaging and come for the cool air and spectacular view from the outdoor observation deck. This is the highest point in the island at 1,547 feet, and the view of Magens Bay is beyond description. Because of its height, the mountaintop was used by the government as a signal station in the 1940s. The indoor snack bar has a six-foot mahogany bar, from which it has served more than six million banana daiquiris. You'll find a good selection of island products in the enclosed air-conditioned mall, and the talking parrots at the entrance will keep the kids occupied while you shop. Mountain Top is open daily, 9 am to 4 pm. ☎ 774-4370.

Adventures on Water

The combination of ideal weather and crystal-clear water makes St. Thomas the perfect setting for a watersports enthusiast's dream vacation. Boating, deep-sea fishing, windsurfing, snorkeling and scuba diving are some of the options offered by the island's professional instructors and outfitters. Visitors who prefer less strenuous activities may choose to relax on one of the picturesque beaches or sign on for a tour of the offshore reefs in a submarine.

Best Beaches

With more than 40 beaches, St. Thomas has three or four to suit everyone. All are open to the public, even if the only access is through a resort, and only one, Magens, charges an entrance fee. The following are descriptions of the most popular beaches, running counterclockwise around the island from Charlotte Amalia.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you favor secluded spots, head to the less populated west coast. If you prefer lots of amenities, look for a beach along the popular northeastern shore.*

Morningstar Beach is easily accessible from Charlotte Amalia. If you don't have a car, just hop aboard *The Reefer* ferry for the short ride from the capital's waterfront. The trip costs $4 each way, leaving from in front of the Rolex store every hour on the hour from 9 am to 4 pm daily, with a reverse schedule on Sundays, ☎ 776-8500, ext. 445.

Since Marriott's Frenchman's Reef and Morning Star Resorts are here, you can get meals and drinks at the beachside bars and rent lounge chairs, umbrellas and watersports equipment. Locals come here to play sand volleyball and body surf, and the water is usually full of colorful Sunfish and windsurfer sails. Snorkeling is fairly interesting around the rocks at both ends of the beach.

Bolongo Beach draws a young, active crowd that enjoys snorkeling in the bay and lounging around the white sand with a cold drink from the laid-back bar that's connected with the Bolongo Bay Beach Club. The St. Thomas Diving Club is located here, and you can rent snorkeling equipment and book scuba trips through them. ☎ 776-2381.

Scott Beach is off Route 32 at the Compass Point turnoff. You can rent lounge chairs and umbrellas for a day on the beautiful beach, but watch out for the strong surf and deep drop-off a short distance from shore.

Secret Harbour Beach, behind the resort with the same name, is off Route 322 just south of Red Hook. Palm trees provide shade. Rent some snorkeling equipment to explore the offshore reef.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Several good beaches rim the piece of land that juts out into the sea south of Red Hook. Take the rather-rough secondary road out to* ***Vessup Bay*** *on the north side, or follow Route 322 to* ***Blue-beard's Beach*** *east of the Ritz Carlton.*

Sapphire Beach is a half-mile of fine sand off Route 38 around the northern corner from Red Hook. It's popular for all types of watersports including parasailing, windsurfing and sailing. The view of nearby islands is terrific. You can get refreshments and rent equip-

ment from the sports hut connected with the Sapphire Beach Resort and Marina, and scuba trips are arranged through **Dive In!**, ☎ 800-524-2090. Snorkelers can join the diving trips or try the close-in sites along the reefs at both ends of the beach. On Sundays, the resort hosts a popular beach party with live entertainment.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Several resorts line the gorgeous beaches along Water Bay off Smith Bay Road (Route 38) between Sapphire Beach and Coki Beach. You can rent Jet Skis, pedal boats, windsurfers, Sunfish and snorkeling equipment from various vendors, and there's no shortage of beach bars and full-service restaurants.*

Coki Beach is terrific for snorkeling and scuba diving. Turn onto Route 388 off Route 38 and look for parking along the narrow road that's lined with vendors and snack shacks. This busy spot is a favorite for novice divers because of the interesting coral and fish near the shore, and **Coki Beach Dive Club** offers instruction and equipment rental right on the beach. (The Coral World Underwater Observatory is built above the reef around the eastern curve of the beach.) There's only a small area of open sand for relaxing, but you'll likely want to spend most of the time in the water anyway. Ringo at **Sun Seekers Beach Rental** will fix you up with everything you need. ☎ 775-9682.

CRAFTY ASIDE

Be sure to visit local celebrity and craftswoman **Terry White**, ☎ 775-2566, in her open-air stall located near the road. She has a variety of things to sell. Her handmade island dolls each have their own personality. Ask her about her folk-art award from the Smithsonian.

Magens Beach is so nearly perfect that it's listed by *Condé Nast Traveler* as one of the world's 10 most beautiful beaches. Green hills dip down to the mile-long, sugar-white sand beach lining a bright blue bay that cuts deep into the island's north coast. Shady Route 35 dead-ends at the popular beach, which is surrounded by a park donated to the public by publisher Arthur Fairchild in 1946. It's worth the $1 per car, $1 per adult and 25¢ per child fee to get in. Changing rooms, restrooms, snack bars, a gift shop and picnic tables are located at one

end. You can rent watersports equipment, lounge chairs, rafts, lockers and towels. The water here is calm with a smooth, sandy bottom, so swimming is great but snorkeling is a waste of time.

Hull Beach, at the end of Route 37 just west of Magens, is the island's best surfing beach because the western end is wide open to rough Atlantic waves. Local fishermen anchor their brightly-colored boats here. The water tends to be calm enough for swimming near the shady beach. The **Hideaway Bar** serves a variety of refreshments and features live music on Sunday afternoons, ☎ 777-1898.

Brewers Beach, near the University of the Virgin Islands on the south coast west of Charlotte Amalie, is great for swimming and watching planes arrive and depart from the airport. The beach is especially busy on the weekends, but you can watch the sun set in relative solitude most evenings. Watersports equipment is available for rent and snack trucks show up most afternoons.

Lindbergh Beach is named after Charles Lindbergh, who landed on the island during his around-the-world flight in the 1920s. It's adjacent to the airport. You can rent watersports equipment from vendors at several beachside hotels. The water is calm with a sandy floor – ideal for swimming. The beach is long enough for leisurely strolls.

Submarine Tour

A voyage aboard the submarine ***Atlantis***, out of Charlotte Amalie, is a novel way to see the fantastic underwater world surrounding St. Thomas. This is a true submarine diving into the depths of a real ocean, so the experience is better than the glass-bottom boat trip or aquarium tour.

The sub is 50 feet long, 13 feet wide and weighs 49 tons. It was specifically designed for tourists and is air conditioned and roomy (seven feet in diameter. Both sides are lined with flat viewing windows that allow you to see through several ports as the sub dives 90 feet below the water's surface.

Once submerged, the vessel slowly cruises about 1½ miles past coral reefs that draw a variety of fascinating marine life. The trip is narrated, so all the most interesting sites and creatures are identified.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *The light is usually strong enough to allow photographs using a fast-speed film (ASA 400 or higher), but a flash won't work.*

The excursion departs hourly from the Havensight Cruise Ship Dock Monday through Saturday, but the timetable varies, so call the 24-hour information line for the current schedule, ☎ 776-0288. Allow a total of two hours, which includes the tender ride to and from the submarine and the one-hour underwater tour. Tickets are $75 per person, and children must be over 36 inches tall to board the submarine. For reservations, ☎ 776-5650 or 800-253-0493.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

Experts rate the Virgin Islands among the best sites in the world for both novice and experienced divers. The clear waters often offer visibility up to 150 feet, and the average year-round water temperature is 80°. Inexperienced divers and snorkelers can explore a variety of close-in shallow reefs that serve as feeding grounds for colorful fish. Expert divers have an even larger choice of fascinating sites located within easy boating distance from shore.

NOTE: *The St. Thomas Hospital has a hyperbaric (recompression) chamber,* ☎ *776-8311.*

TIPS FOR BETTER SNORKELING

- Wear a T-shirt in the water; it will keep you warm and protect you from the sun's rays.
- Apply sun lotion (SPF 15 or higher) at least an hour before you enter the water, so it will have time to absorb.
- Visibility is best on calm, sunny mornings.
- Don't stand on anything except sand. Coral is extremely fragile and grows slowly.
- Sea urchins, the round critters with black quills, sting like the devil.
- Stings from little jellyfish with long tentacles hurt more than stings from big ones with short tentacles.

Many visitors head to **Coki Beach** on the north coast for snorkeling, scuba instruction and shore diving. If you have your own equipment,

you can set out solo (air fills are available from Coki Beach Dive Club). Otherwise, snorkeling gear is available for rent from beachside vendors. Certification courses or introduction dives can be arranged through Coki Beach Dive Club.

The rocks and coral along the east side of the bay, near Coral World's Underwater Observatory, harbor an abundance of sergeant majors and parrotfish that have become accustomed to eating from human hands. It is great fun, but environmentalists take a dim view of this, calling it "habitat adulteration." Farther out from shore, you may see yellowtail snapper, tarpon and stingrays. Along the western side of the bay, you'll find fewer people and better coral.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *The best place on the island to buy snorkeling equipment is* ***Mask and Fin*** *at 42 Norre Gade in Charlotte Amalie.* ☎ *774-7177. They also have a list of good snorkeling spots.*

Other good snorkeling beaches include **Sapphire**, **Hull** and **Brewers.** Most dive operators will allow snorkelers to go along on scuba trips, if there's room on the boat. The best dive sites for snorkelers are **Cow** and **Calf**, in **Jersey Bay** off the southeast coast, and the waters off **St. James Island**, across from the southeastern tip of St. Thomas. Both these areas have coral, caves and abundant fish at depths of five to 25 feet, which is easily visible to snorkelers.

If you're interested in viewing a sunken ship, head out to the ***Cartanser Senior***, a 190-foot World War I cargo ship that lies in 35 to 50 feet of water off the south shore near Buck Island. Visibility is usually good enough for snorkelers to see the wreck and feed the schools of fish that are drawn to the thick coral growing on the ship's hull.

Experienced divers have a choice of 30 excellent sites within a 20-minute boat ride from St. Thomas. Those on the north side of the island are favored for the bounteous numbers of fish that are carried by the currents at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Waters off **Thatch Cay** and **Congo Cay** offer boulders, tunnels and arches. **Coki Beach** is known for great night diving.

South of St. Thomas, **French Cap Cay** has a fascinating reef with caves and tunnels. Colorful sponges, corals and sea fans grow along the reef and draw a variety of sea creatures. Other good dives sites include the canyons just off **Capella Island,** a bit east of Buck Island, and the giant underwater boulders off **Saba Island**, west of Water Island.

Dive Operators

The following dive shops on St. Thomas offer first-class PADI instruction, multi-level certification, guided dive trips and equipment rental. Most operators schedule two boat trips daily and arrange instruction courses to suit.

Expect to pay $45-$55 for a one-tank dive, $70-$75 for a two-tank dive, about $60 for an introductory resort-course dive and $385 for an open-water certification course.

NOTE: *The area code for all the US Virgin Islands is 340.*

Coki Beach Dive Club is one of the most convenient dive operations on the island. They are located right on Coki Beach, just steps from the water. The staff specializes in making beginners feel at ease in the water, whether they are snorkeling or diving, and the PADI instructors offer guided trips from the beach. Equipment can be rented on-site, there are lockers for your valuables and snack shacks for refreshments. Experienced divers will want to sign up for night dives on Wednesdays. Located on Coki Beach ☎ 775-4220 (phone/fax); 800-474-2654; http://.cokidive.com; e-mail pete@cokidive.com.

Underwater Safaris is a five-star PADI and Gold Palm resort facility that's been around for more than 15 years. Their dive boats are routinely inspected by the US Coast Guard and driven by licensed captains. The well-stocked dive shop is located at Safe Haven Marina (formerly Yacht Haven Marina), Charlotte Amalie. ☎ 774-1350; fax 777-8733; e-mail uws@diveusvi.com.

St. Thomas Diving Club, a five-star PADI center, offers an all-day excursion on Thursdays featuring a two-tank dive to the wreck of the HMS *Rhone*, off the British Virgin Islands. On Saturdays, the club makes a trip to the wreck of the *Witshoal* (or W.I.T. Shoal). Snorkelers are welcome on some excursions at a cost of $30. Located on Bolongo Bay. ☎ 776-2381; 800-524-4746; fax 777-3232; www.st-thomas-divingclub.com; e-mail bill2381@viaccess.net.

Aqua Action is a five-star PADI facility as well as a full-service watersports center. The staff offers an introductory scuba course, certification courses and daily boat trips for experienced divers. In addition, you can rent kayaks, paddleboats, snorkel gear and other sports equipment. Located at Secret Harbour Beach Resort ☎ 775-6285; 888-775-6285; fax 775-1501; www.st-thomas.com/aquaaction/.

Chris Sawyer Diving Center is known among experienced divers for full-day trips to the sunken HMS *Rhone* and night dives at the wreck.

In addition, the five-star PADI center organizes dive packages for guests of Colony Point Pleasant, Renaissance Grand Beach and Wyndham Sugar Bay Beach Resorts. Chris, who started diving 30 years ago as a student at UCLA, and his staff are serious about both the safety and fun of diving. Thorough pre-dive instruction and site briefings are given as each small group heads out on the 42-foot custom-built dive boat. A well-stocked store is located at American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook, ☎ 777-7804; 800-882-2965; fax 775-9495; www.sawyerdive.com.

Admiralty Dive Center is owned by diving enthusiasts Marty and Portia Martinez. Their shop caters to snorkelers and divers who like to travel light and rent top-notch equipment on site. In addition, they offer equipment sales and repair, PADI and NAUI diving instruction, introductory "Discover Scuba" classes and dive/stay packages through nearby hotels. Located at Holiday Inn Windward Passage in Charlotte Amalie, ☎ 777-9802 or 888-900-DIVE; www.admiraltydive.com.

Scuba Bob is actually Bob Clements, a PADI master scuba trainer who will customize dive instruction and certification classes to fit your schedule and needs. He also runs scuba excursions to local dive sites, arranges charters and does underwater photography. Actually, there isn't much Bob can't do for divers who visit St. Thomas. He even rents condos. Contact him at 9716 Estate Thomas, Suite 8-67, ☎ 715-3494; www.ScubaBob.com or www.islands.vi/~scubabob/index.htm.

Sea Trade, Ltd. and **Sea Horse Dive Shop** offer dives at 58 sites from a customized 31-foot dive boat. Each excursion is tailored for divers' experience level, and may include shallow reefs or deep wrecks. The PADI center conducts specialty courses, scuba reviews, introductory resort lessons and open-water certification classes. Cruise ship passengers can call ahead to arrange for pick-up at the dock. Equipment sales, repair and rental, including air fills, are available at the shop located at Crown Bay Marina, just west of Charlotte Amalie, ☎ 774-2001; fax 777-9600; e-mail diveusvi@islands.vi.

Dive In! is often recommended by divers who enjoy individual attention and expert instruction. Owners Bobbie and Bruce Pachta run the full-service PADI shop, which offers beginning resort courses through advanced training and schedules both beach and boat dives. Trips go to more than 40 spots located off both the north and south shores and include many sites off St. John. You can bring home a picture or video of yourself taken underwater. Located at Sapphire Beach Resort & Marina, between Coki Beach and Red Hook, ☎ 775-6100 or 800-524-2090; fax 775-4024.

OPUS Caribbean Dive Charters, run by Michelle and Len Amato, is the way to go if you want to mix sailing, diving, snorkeling and waterskiing. Two instructors are on board the 50-foot trimaran, which has three double cabins with private baths. You'll travel to secluded beaches, enjoy hot showers and eat great food. Contact the Amatos for information and charter reservations. ☎ 774-5630; fax 776-3074; e-mail diveopus@viaccess.net.

Snuba

Snuba is the latest trend in underwater exploration for those who want to go deeper than a snorkel allows without all the equipment and training required for scuba diving. Basically, you breathe through a hose hooked to an air tank that floats on the surface above you. Anyone over the age of eight can do it, and the air hose is long enough to allow dives up to 20 feet deep. You'll find an outfitter at Coral World on Coki Bay. ☎ 693-8063.

Boating & Sailing

St. Thomas is a known center for its charter boat operations, and with good reason. Year-round balmy weather and calm, clear seas draw visitors who crave hidden coves, deserted beaches and dependable sun, matched with trouble-free anchorages and full-service marinas.

REGATTA DELIGHT

Regattas are held in the Virgin Islands throughout the year. One of the largest and best known is the **Rolex Cup Regatta**, held at St. Thomas Yacht Club each April. ☎ 775-6320.

You can rent everything from a small dinghy to a huge oceanworthy yacht, either bare-boat or with a full crew and provisions. Experienced yachtsmen may compete in various regattas throughout the year, and novices like to try their hand at handling a day rental. Those who truly want to do nothing but relax may opt for a half- or full-day catered sail along the coast or out to a neighboring island.

The following companies are a few of the best who operate out of St. Thomas. Many have stateside offices, toll-free numbers and websites for easy contact. All are in area code 340, unless noted otherwise.

Cruise Operators

The least complicated way to spend some time on the water is to sign on for a full-service cruise that includes snorkeling, swimming, entertainment, food and drinks. A number of companies compete for your business, so you'll find plenty of information in visitors' publications and at hotel concierge desks around the island.

You'll have the best experience if you make a few calls before you book. Perhaps the most important difference between a good cruise and a fantastic cruise is the number of passengers on your boat. Ask how many people the boat is licensed to carry and how many are expected at the time you want to go, then sign up for the boat with the best ratio.

Rates run around $85-$95 per person for full-day excursions that include unlimited drinks and lunch. Prices for half-day and sunset sails vary depending on the type of refreshments served and the length of the trip. While you probably can't make a bad choice among the many operators on St. Thomas, the following have a reputation for excellence.

New Horizons is a 64-foot ketch (two-masted sailboat) with a cushioned sundeck and a bimini awning to provide shade. All cruises begin with fresh-baked pastries, and choices from the open bar include soda, juice and a variety of alcoholic drinks. (Try the "Nooner," their signature drink.) The all-day cruise includes a buffet lunch with hot entrées and desserts. During the day, the boat anchors so passengers can snorkel, swim or take a dinghy ride to a secluded beach. Choose from full-day, half-day and sunset trips. ***New Horizons II,*** a 44-foot speedboat, takes passengers on a day-long tour of four British Virgin Islands. An affiliated operator, **Power Trips,** rents drive-your-own 25-foot Wellcraft powerboats with 200hp Yamaha engines for independent motoring to neighboring islands. The office is located in suite 16 at Red Hook Plaza, ☎ 775 1171; www.americasparadise.com/newhorizons; e-mail newhorizons@viaccess.net.

Yacht Nightwind, a 50-foot oceangoing yawl (two-masted sailboat with a small jigger mast on the stern), sets out from Sapphire Marina every morning at 9 am. As you enjoy a light breakfast, the boat glides smoothly eastward toward St. John. The friendly crew, headed by Steve and June Marsh, tells tales and points out interesting sites along the way, and the bar is always open. During the day, you'll anchor twice in tranquil bays where you can snorkel or swim. Early afternoon features entertainment and a buffet lunch, including champagne and to-die-for chocolate desserts. Located at Sapphire Marina on Sapphire

Bay, just north of Red Hook, ☎ 775-4110; fax 775-0377; www.americasparadise.com/nightwind; e-mail nightwind@americasparadise.com.

CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

If you go by boat to one of the British Virgin Islands, you must clear Customs. Be prepared to present official identification (a valid passport, or a picture ID with a birth certificate or voter's registration card) and pay the $15 fee.

Limnos Charters runs 53-foot twin-engine catamarans from Red Hook Harbor to the British Virgin Islands, covering about 70 miles of paradise in a day. Two roomy decks provide plenty of space for about 40 passengers, and the complimentary bar features liquor, wine, beer and soda. Stops include The Baths on Virgin Gorda and some caves at Norman Island. The Limnos office is at the American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook, ☎ 775-3203; fax 775-3790; e-mail questions@limnoscharters.com.

Captain Nautica uses a motor-powered hard-hull raft to take up to 15 passengers on a sightseeing excursion spiced with island legends and pirate tales. Known as the "No Snooze Cruise," this high-energy trip leaves from Red Hook and includes two snorkeling stops off the British Virgins, Caribbean music, snacks and drinks. You buy your own lunch during a stop at Norman Island. ☎ 715-3379.

Daydreamer and ***Coconut*** are trimarans that provide smooth sailing and plenty of room. Their shallow draft allows them to anchor close to secluded beaches for snorkeling, swimming and relaxing. Both boats are staffed by a friendly crew and there's plenty of shade, an open bar and great snacks. Passengers may use the high-quality snorkeling gear, floats, life vests and freshwater deck shower. At lunchtime, the boats anchor off Jost Van Dyke in the BVI for a meal at a beachside restaurant followed by a stop at the Soggy Dollar Bar for one of their famous "Painkiller" drinks. Half-day, sunset and St. John trips are also available. ☎ 775-2584.

Winifred is a 14-ton classic wooden sailing yacht that takes only two to six guests on its daily cruise from Red Hook to St. John, St. James and nearby islands. An elegant lunch is served following a snorkel stop, and Bloody Marys are featured at the open bar. Docked at American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook, ☎ 775-7898; fax 771-1020; e-mail winifred@islands.vi.

Satori is a 75-foot classic schooner owned by Captain Scott Nichols. It makes full-day, half-day and sunset sails to St. John, St. James and nearby US islands. The handsome, traditionally rigged ship has been featured in a publication called *Classic Yacht Interiors*, and has appeared in commercials and movies. It's a perfect theme-party boat and can be chartered for any special occasion. Or, sign on for a scheduled cruise from Red Hook and enjoy the sights of the Caribbean while relaxing in one of the hammocks. ☎ 775-5262.

Jolly Mon**,** a 48-foot yawl owned and operated by Gary and Gail Sabeh, sails out of Charlotte Amalie with up to six passengers. This is a peaceful sail with a snorkeling stop. For details, ☎ 513-2693 or page the Sabehs at ☎ 776-0213.

Sundance, the beautiful 44-foot pride of Captains Wayne and Irene, carries up to six guests from American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook to isolated spots for sunning, snorkeling and swimming. Everything's provided, including continental breakfast and champagne lunch. ☎ 779-1722.

Fantasy is the boat President Bill Clinton and his family sailed on during their island visit. You'll get the same royal treatment from Captain Pam Heath when you climb aboard for a trip to St. John. You can even try out your sailing skills (if you have none, the captains will teach you). Or, simply sit back and enjoy the day. Snorkeling equipment, floats, fishing gear, meals and open bar are included. ☎ 775-5652

True Love was the yacht featured in the movie *High Society*, and you'll feel like one of the elite when you sign on for a day cruise to nearby islands from Sapphire Marina. Of course, all the best of everything is provided, and the Key lime coconut cake is a legend in its own time. Ask about special group rates, ☎ 779-1640; www.truelovecharters.com.

Independence, a lovely 44-foot sailboat captained by Pat Stoeken, takes only six guests on its full- and half-day cruises, so personalized service is guaranteed. There's time for snorkeling and swimming when the boat anchors in gloriously private spots, and lunch is prepared on board and served on the shady deck. The bar opens soon after the boat departs from Red Hook. ☎ 775-1408.

Stormy Petrel and ***Pirate's Penny*** have been around for more than 20 years, and the large number of repeat customers is their best endorsement. The 42-foot boats leave American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook and head out to The Baths on Virgin Gorda, carrying no more than 12 guests. ☎ 775-7990 or 866-5714.

Rush Hour is Stephen and Pamela Carpenter's 38-foot luxury cigarette boat powered by a 1,000hp motor. They invite you to join them on island trips covering up to 150 miles – you can plan the itinerary yourself! Meals and British customs fees are not included in the base price. Contact High Performance Charters, ☎ 777-7545 (phone/fax).

Dohm's Water Taxi and Charters allows you to go anywhere in the US or British Virgin Islands. The crewed catamarans can carry up to 30 passengers, and the captains often make stops on several islands during a full-day excursion. You can arrange to be picked up at your beachfront hotel. ☎ 775-6501.

Kon Tiki **Party Raft** is a huge, glass-bottomed, roofed barge that celebrates fun, rum, sea and sun. A calypso band plays island music as the boat cruises along. Passengers help themselves to rum punch from bottomless barrels, dance, compete in limbo contests and party hearty. The *Kon Tiki* stops over coral reefs so everyone can ooh-aah at the colorful fish, and also pulls into an isolated bay for swimming. ☎ 775-5055.

Boat Charters

Bare-boat and fully-crewed charters are available for a day, a week or longer from more than a dozen companies based in St. Thomas. Expect rates to be in the range of $250 to $350 per day, depending on season, length of charter, type of boat and extra features. The following are suggested based on their excellent reputation among yachtsmen, longevity and number of available rentals.

Admiralty Yacht Vacations, owned by Hal and Anne Borns, offers 22-foot, 25-foot and 28-foot Mako center-console and cutty-cabins. They are based at Admiral's Inn, Villa Olga, Frenchtown, ☎ 774-2172 or 800-544-0493; fax 774-8010 ; www.admirals.com; e-mail query@admirals.com.

CYOA has more than 100 fully crewed yachts in the Virgin Islands. They also run the International School of Sailing for anyone who wants to learn the basics or improve their skills. Located at Frenchtown Marina, near Charlotte Amalie, ☎ 777-9690 or 800-944-CYOA; fax 777-9750; www.cyoacharters.com; e-mail info@cyoacharters.com.

V.I.P. (Virgin Island Power) Yacht Charters rents luxury craft with features such as queen-size beds, microwaves, televisions and VCRs. You can choose to captain your own yacht or hire an experienced crew to pamper you with gourmet meals and watersports instruction. Their yachts are based at Saga Haven Marina on the southeast coast.

☎ 776-1510 or 800-524-2015; fax 776-3801; www.vipyachts.com; e-mail info@vipyachts.com.

Nauti Nymph has a large fleet of 25- to 29-foot boats powered by single or twin Yamaha engines. All boats have full bimini tops, large cushioned sun platforms, built-in ice coolers and freshwater showers. Charter bare boat or fully crewed from their base at American Yacht Harbor, Red Hook, ☎ 775-5066 or 800-734-7345; e-mail nauti@viaccess.net.

See and Ski boats are powered by Yamaha single and twin engines, and equipped with charts, radios, safety equipment, coolers, freshwater showers and ample dry storage for all your gear. Based in Red Hook at American Yacht Harbor, ☎ 775-6265.

Aqua Blue has powerboats at both Sapphire Beach Marina and American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook. The 22- and 26-foot boats allow you the freedom to go anywhere in the islands for a day of swimming, snorkeling, and picnicking. Bimini tops provide shade, and there are freshwater showers on deck. ☎ 775-1242.

Fan Fare sailboats range from 20 to 40 feet and can be chartered bareboat by the day by experienced sailors. Longer charters are possible, as are fully crewed trips. This is an ideal way to try the bare boating concept before you commit to a week-long sail. Contact them at Vessup Point Marina, south of Red Hook, ☎ 715-1326 (phone/fax); www.fanfare.ai; e-mail fanfare@viaccess.net.

ONE CALL DOES IT ALL

If you get overwhelmed by all the boat charter choices, make one call to the office at American Yacht Harbor in Red Hook and ask for help in finding the right boat for you. ☎ 775-6454.

Fishing

Even if you're not a fisherman, consider spending at least half a day on a deep-sea fishing boat. More than 20 world fishing records have been won in the Virgin Islands due to their prime location near the world famous **North Drop**, part of the six-mile-deep Puerto Rican Trench, which is the deepest spot in the Atlantic Ocean. Some of the largest sport fish in the world swim in these waters, including marlin, dolphin fish, wahoo and tuna. Nearer the shore, kingfish, bonefish, tarpon, amberjack, grouper, mackerel and snappers are abundant year-round.

Many deep-sea fishing operations based on St. Thomas are owned and operated by record-holding fishermen who enjoy sharing their knowledge and skills with others. Don't be intimidated if you're a novice. Most outfitters can match you with boats and captains that will make you look like a pro.

On half-day trips, you can choose between morning or afternoon excursions that focus on close-in fishing. Full-day charters either head directly for the North Drop in search of marlin or motor slowly toward deep water, trolling for a variety of fish along the way.

> **AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *You don't need a license to fish from shore, and deep-sea licenses are included in the cost of boat charters.*

Expect to pay around $400-$500 per boat for a half-day charter and double that amount for a full-day outing. You can split the cost with up to five other fishermen, and the charter companies often will help you find some buddies, if you don't have a group of your own. Unlike the all-inclusive pleasure cruises, fishing boats do not supply food and an open bar, but most do equip you with bait, tackle, ice beer, and soft drinks.

FISHING ETIQUETTE

Catch-and-release sports fishing is the norm in the Virgin Islands. In addition, fishermen often tag their catch before releasing them so that researchers can track and study various species.

One of the best ways to find a boat and captain that match your fishing skills and expectations is to stroll along the docks or call the offices at **American Yacht Harbor** in Red Hook, ☎ 775-6454, or **Sapphire Beach Marina** on the northeast coast in Sapphire Bay, ☎ 775-6100. Many fishing charters are based at these marinas and the staff can give you inside information to help you choose the right charter.

Angling Operators

You might also consider one of the following reputable outfitters:

Hook-E-Player, a 25-foot catamaran, is perfect for light-tackle fishing or just cruising. Captain Frank Griffin arranges trips lasting from three to eight hours, and encourages adventurous types to simply show up at the marina in Red Hook to see if he can accommodate them on the

spot. More cautious folks will want to book in advance. ☎ 775-3281; fax 715-1509; www.usvifishing.com; e-mail hookeplayer@islands.vi.

Prowler Sportfishing Charters runs tournament-equipped 45- and 40-foot air-conditioned boats on half- and full-day charters out of the American Yacht Harbor Marina in Red Hook. Captain Bill McCauley, a world-record-holding fisherman from Maryland, welcomes novices and experts for either light-tackle fishing near shore or going for the big ones at the North Drop. ☎ 779-2515 or 775-7205.

Marlin Prince is a 45-foot Viking with twin-diesel engines, air conditioning, tournament equipment and a tuna tower. Captain John Prince can lead you to the best spots for marlin, tuna and wahoo. Docked at American Yacht Harbor Marina, ☎ 693-5929 or 779-5939; www.marlinprince.com.

Fish Hawk II is a 43-foot diesel-powered boat captained by Al Petrosky, a native of New Jersey who has a reputation for pulling in record catches. Find Captain Al at Fish Hawk Marina on the lagoon in Frydenhoj on the southeast shore, ☎ 775-9058.

Fin Stalker, a 30-foot turbo twin diesel craft with tournament rigging, leaves out of Red Hook with up to six passengers for a day of fishing. You can choose among inshore and offshore sites, or ask Captain Joe Alvarez about touring and fishing the British Virgins. ☎ 775-9982 or 690-1943.

FEELING COMPETITIVE?

The Virgin Islands Game Fishing Club kicks off fishing competition in the islands with the **Annual July Open Tournament**. This event is followed by **American Yacht Harbor's Billfish Tournament** and the **USVI Open/Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament.** If you want to participate or observe one of these sportfishing tournaments, get a schedule and information from the USVI Tourist Bureau, ☎ 800-372-USVI or The American Yacht Harbor, ☎ 776-5970.

Kayaking

Virgin Island Ecotours leads kayak expeditions through the mysterious and intriguing **Mangrove Lagoon and Marine Sanctuary** off the southeast shore. This protected area is filled with egrets, heron,

iguanas, seahorses and juvenile reef fish. The only way to see it up close is on one of these guided nature tours. A marine biologists or trained naturalist will go along to point out and explain interesting sights as you head out on a two-man sit-on-top kayak.

The kayaks are stable and easy to operate, so even children can join the tour. The first hour is spent paddling through the protected waters with frequent stops to observe the mangrove thicket and discuss the ecological importance of the area. You can snorkel in shallow water at the mouth of the lagoon. Expect to see large groups of young parotfish, herring, snappers, stingrays and barracudas.

Call ahead for reservations because this is a popular tour that books up quickly during high season. The cost is $50 per person and includes snorkeling gear, safety vest, waterproof storage bag and bottled water. Virgin Islands Ecotours is off Route 32 at Estate Nadir, ☎ 779-2155; fax 774-4601; www.usvi-on-line.com/partners/vieco; e-mail fnewbolds@virginislands.net.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Kayaks are often complimentary for guests at the larger resorts. Otherwise, check with the local watersports centers.*

Surfing & Windsurfing

The best waves are found at **Hull Bay** on the north coast. Experienced surfers come here to ride the wild roll of the Atlantic. This is also the beach with the strongest winds for windsurfing, but most enthusiasts prefer calmer seas around the east end of the island.

Many resorts and some public beaches have windsurfing boards for rent for about $20 per hour, with an hour of instruction priced at around $50. **West Indies Windsurfing,** ☎ 775-6530, at Bluebeard's Beach (Vessup Bay) on the south side of Red Hook, is a well-known outfitter. Local windsurfers often come to this area for informal competitions. Other popular windsurfing beaches include **Sapphire**, where you can get instruction on a simulator, and **Brewers**, which is favored by local college students.

Parasailing

Most waterside resorts offer parasailing right off their beach through their own watersports center. In addition, **Caribbean Parasail and**

Watersports, ☎ 775-9360, will arrange to meet you on almost any beach or pick you up at the cruise-ship dock. Their boats are custom designed for dry take-offs and landings, so you can get a seagull's view of the island without getting wet.

High Fever Parasail, ☎ 690-7272, is run by Captain Scotty, who has been parasailing in the Virgin Islands for more than a decade. His operation is set up across from Coral World at Coki Point, which gives visitors the option of combining the two for a view of the sea from both the air and below water. Look for High Fever's yellow smiley-face trademark on flags at the side of the road and on the parachute.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Ask about the $5 discount coupon offered for High Fever Parasailing when you buy an admission ticket for Coral World.*

Adventures on Foot

While most of the adventures in St. Thomas happen on, in and under the water, there's still plenty to do on dry land.

Hiking

Serious hikers probably will want to head for St. John, but casual walkers can find a number of places to stroll. Meandering along any of the gorgeous beaches is fun, especially early in the morning or after sunset when the crowds leave. Another possibility is the waterfront in Charlotte Amalie.

The mountain ridge that runs east-west through the center of the island offers superb views. Unfortunately, there are no maintained trails, so walkers must travel along busy roadways – not a good idea. Plan to drive along Crown Mountain (Route 33) or Fortuna (Route 30) and stop at the turnoffs and parking areas where you can stretch your legs and admire the fabulous views.

Tennis

Two lighted public tennis courts are available at **Sub Base**, just west of Charlotte Amalie near the Water and Power Authority complex. In addition, most resorts will allow non-guests to play or take lessons for a reasonable fee. Call ahead for reservations.

Bolongo Bay Beach Club and Villas charges $10 per hour per court for non-guests who wish to use one of the two unlighted courts. ☎ 775-1800.

Marriott Frenchman's Reef and **Morning Star Beach Resort** share two lighted courts. Non-guests may reserve a court for $10 per hour, and one-hour lessons are available for $39. ☎ 776-8500, ext. 6818.

Renaissance Grand Beach Resort has six lighted courts. Non-guests may reserve a court for $8 per hour. The tennis pro charges $45 for an hour-long private lesson and $25 for a half-hour lesson. ☎ 775-1510, ext. 7800.

Ritz Carlton invites non-guests to take private lessons from their tennis pro at a charge of $60 per hour or $35 per half-hour. ☎ 775-3333, ext. 58.

Sapphire Beach Resort has four unlighted courts. Non-guests may reserve one at a rate of $10 per hour. Private lessons are available for $40 per hour or $25 per half-hour. ☎ 775-6100, ext. 8135.

Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort has the island's only court with stadium seating for tournament play. Five additional lighted courts may be used by non-guests at a charge of $8 per hour. Tennis pro Cecil Phillips gives private lessons at the resort, and you may make arrangements directly with him, ☎ 777-0455. Reserve a court by phoning the resort, ☎ 777-7100.

Golf

St. Thomas has one spectacular golf course, **Mahogany Run**. Tom and George Fazio designed this 18-hole championship masterpiece and multimillion-dollar renovations have kept it in world-class condition. The 6,022-yard, par-70 course sprawls over rolling hills on the north side of the island overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

Mahogany Run is known for its demanding Devil's Triangle, formed by the 13th, 14th and 15th fairways, which are angled at the top of towering cliffs 150 feet above the ocean. Golfers often find their attention wandering to the pounding surf below or the tiny islands in the distance.

Island visitors and cruise-ship passengers are invited to play the course, which is considered one of the best in the Caribbean. Green fees are $100 per person for 18 holes and a half-share of the mandatory golf

cart, or $65 for nine holes with a shared cart. Right- and left-handed rental clubs are available for $20 if you're playing 18 holes, and $10 if you're playing nine. Ask about reduced green fees after 2 pm.

Mahogany Run also features a driving range, putting green, 19th-hole snack bar, Mr. Bogie's terrace bar and a fully stocked pro shop. The course is open daily with tee times from 7 am until 4:50 pm; Pro shop hours are 7 am to 5:30 pm; and Mr. Bogie's serves 11 am until 7 pm. Call in advance for tee times. ☎ 777-6006 or 800-253-7103; www.st-thomas.com/mahogany.

KEEPING BUFF

Don't neglect your workout routine while you're in the islands. A guest pass at **Bayside Fitness Center** at Bolongo Beach Resort is only $10 per day. The club has free weights, treadmills and saunas, and is open weekdays from 6 am to 9 pm and weekends from 8 am until 5 pm. ☎ 693-2600. Anyone with a membership at **Gold's Gym** can workout at the facility at 22 Dronningens Gade, next to Hard Rock Café in Charlotte Amalie. Call ahead for the hours. ☎ 777-9474.

Adventures on Horseback

One of the best ways to see St. Thomas from a whole different perspective is on horseback. **Half Moon Stables** offers rides over 60 acres of back-country trails above Magens Bay with superb views of the British Virgin Islands in the distance. The popular adventure also includes a trot along the water's edge on an isolated beach. Owner Dori Derr and her experienced staff welcome beginners as well as accomplished horsemen, and riders can choose Western or English saddles. Hour-long guided rides cost $45 per person. Call or e-mail in advance to reserve your spot ☎ 777-6088; e-mail jimslaw@islands.vi.

Adventures on Wheels

Mountain Biking

Avid bikers who can manage the hills and narrow, shoulderless roads will want to contact **Mountain Bike Adventure**. They run a 1½-hour tour on 21-speed Trek mountain bikes that takes riders up into the hills above Magens Bay and out to Peterborg Point, an off-the-beaten-track spit of land that juts into the Atlantic on the east side of the bay. The cost, including helmets, water bottles and a knowledgeable guide, is $35. Call for reservations, ☎ 776-1727.

Mountain Bike Tours of Water Island offer a three-hour tour, including transportation by ferry to Water Island from Crown Bay Marina, for $60. This is a great day trip and a terrific way to see this nearby island. For more information, see page 56 in the *Touring* section. For reservations, ☎ 714-2186.

Adventures in the Air

Flightseeing

Sightseeing from the air is one of the most exciting adventures in the Caribbean, and there are two thrilling options for visitors to St. Thomas. Costs vary, but expect to pay around $80-$110 per person for most air tours.

Seaborne Seaplane Adventures offers flights that take off from and land on the water, right in the yacht-filled harbors. Floating docks make boarding simple, even for physically challenged passengers. Riders get an incredible view of crystal-clear waters, small outer islands and coral reefs as the 17-passenger DeHavilland Twin Otter lifts off. In-flight narration, offered in several languages, provides interesting information as the two pilots navigate the plane low-level over the green mountains and white sand that make up the Virgin archipelago. Seaborne provides regularly-scheduled flights between several islands and runs day-trips to the BVI. Call or drop by the office for information

on flightseeing tours, day-trips and transportation between various islands. 3400 Veteran's Drive, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ 777-4491, 888-359-8687.

Air Center Helicopters will take you on a unique tour with a birds-eye view of some of the most beautiful parts of St. Thomas and St. John. Narration keyed to the sights below is played through stereo headsets to reduce outside noise. The helicopter rises into the air west of Charlotte Amalie and passes low over the south shore to St. John, where it hovers over the pristine beaches and national park before heading back via the north shore beaches and mountain-top landmarks of St. Thomas. Get all the information on tours and inter-island transportation from the office at 7 Lindberg Bay, ☎ 775-7335.

■ Shopping

St. Thomas is famous as a duty-free bargain paradise. While some of the claims are overblown, you can find terrific buys on imported merchandise and local products. Since goods are free of state and city taxes, and each US citizen can bring back up to $1,200 worth of purchases duty-free, the final cost of many items is much less than if you'd bought it at home.

Liquor, European china and crystal, and jewelry are some of the best buys, and you can ship large or heavy items home at US postal rates.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you're serious about getting a good bargain on specific merchandise, check prices and quality at shops and discount outlets near your home, so you'll come to St. Thomas as an informed shopper.*

Charlotte Amalie

St. Thomas became the center of trade in the Caribbean back in 1764 when Denmark's king proclaimed it a free port. Local merchants (and allegedly, pirates) did business from warehouses that opened up onto the harbor to provide easy access to the ships that transported their goods around the world.

Today, many of these old warehouses have been transformed into trendy shops selling luxury goods from many countries. Even if you're not a shopper, it's fun to stroll along the narrow alleys and people-watch. On quiet days, you'll almost have the streets and shady courtyards to yourself. But on cruise-ship days, you'll be shoulder-to-shoulder with frenzied shoppers bent on scooping up bags full of bargains before their ship sails.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you want to avoid the masses, check the cruise-ship schedule printed on the front of "St. Thomas This Week," a bright-yellow freebie available everywhere including resorts, car rental offices, the airport and tourist offices.*

Most stores in Charlotte Amalie are open Monday through Saturday, 9 am until 5 pm, but many extend their hours and open on Sunday if a large number of cruise-ship passengers are expected.

Vendors' Plaza is the only spot in town where street merchants can legally sell their goods. (Food vendors are excluded from this city ordinance.) Peddlers begin setting up under brightly-colored umbrellas around 7:30 each morning, Monday through Saturday, and stay until 5:30, or whenever business falls off. They offer a variety of T-shirts, crafts, jewelry and knock-off luxuries. Don't miss the flavor of this shopping area on the waterside in front of Emancipation Park, between Fort Christian and the center of town.

EASY-GOING HASSLE

While street vendors are prohibited from approaching visitors outside their designated area, taxi drivers, tour organizers and timeshare salesmen are not. However, most are friendly, easy-going fellows who will leave you alone after you just say no. You won't have problems with people trying to sell you drugs or stolen junk.

The main shopping area is located along narrow blocks of parallel alleyways between Waterfront Highway on the south and Main Street on the north. More than 400 stores are tucked into these passageways that are bordered by Tolbad Gade on the east, near Vendors' Plaza, and Market Square on the west. A few more notable shops are located on Back Street, which runs parallel to and one block north of Main.

Don't worry about street names. Most are Danish and difficult to pronounce, and most aren't marked by a street sign, anyway. Simply know that the alleyways run north-south between Waterfront and Main, and locals depend on landmarks, such as large banks and public buildings, when giving directions. If you want to find a specific store, look for the easy-to-follow shopping map in the centerfold of ***St. Thomas This Week***, available everywhere.

Large, big-name shops put out so much advertising and are so easily recognized, their listings aren't necessary in this guide. A walk up Main Street will bring you to **Columbian Emeralds, A.H. Riise, Cardow's** and **Little Switzerland.** The following is intended to help you find lesser-known stores with unique merchandise.

Art, Crafts & Gifts

Caribbean Print Gallery has prints and original paintings of island scenes along with cards and historical maps by MAPes MONDe. Old brick walls give this little store a cozy ambiance. Find it in the archway leading off Main into the A.H. Riise Mall. ☎ 776-2886.

The Jonna White Gallery is a sunny showroom for original pieces by this internationally-known artist who puts the colors of the Caribbean on handmade papers. Larger work can be shipped to the States free of charge. The gallery is open every day on the waterfront near Palm Passage, ☎ 776-7779 or 800-200-5285.

The Bernard K. Passman Gallery features the work of this world-famous sculptor who designs black coral jewelry and objets d'art. Most of his pieces are beyond the price range of the average shopper, but you can enjoy viewing them at 38A Main Street. ☎ 777-4580.

Native Arts and Crafts Cooperative is a collection of work by 90 local artisans. You'll find straw bags and hats, spice racks and household items made from native shells and woods. Visit this vast shop on Tolbod Gade, across from Emancipation Park. ☎ 777-1153.

Down Island Traders is the place to look for spices, teas, coffees and jams. The aromatic shop also stocks pottery from local artisans, Caribbean cookbooks, silk-screened bags and multicolored beach towels. Check out the assortment of island goodies on the waterfront west of Vendors' Plaza. ☎ 776-4641.

Antiques

Carson Company Antiques proves that one man's junk is another man's treasure. Come here to rummage through a diverse mix of rare old books, early maps, pottery and jewelry from all parts of the world. You're sure to turn up a true gem. Located on the west side of Royal Dane Mall's narrow alley of shops. ☎ 774-6175.

Watches, Cameras & Electronics

Royal Caribbean stocks all the big names such as Nikon, Panasonic, Sony and Seiko. In addition you'll find Lladró figurines, Mont Blanc pens, Dunhill lighters and Mikimoto pearls. The thing that makes Royal Caribbean unique is its large selection of so many famous brands. You'll probably cut down on your shopping time for specific items if you stop here first. The main store is at 33 Main Street, and another is located at the Havensight Mall. ☎ 776-8890.

Intimate Apparel

Lover's Lane sells seductive lingerie, steamy swimsuits and erotic playthings. Just the place to find a little goodie to give your vacation an exciting jump-start. This fun-to-browse shop is up a narrow flight of stairs on the Waterfront at 33 Raadets Gade. ☎ 777-9616. If you get hooked on this sort of thing, you can order a catalog by calling ☎ 800-744-LOVE or check out their website, www.loverslane.com.

Fashion

Look for designer fashions by Fendi, Polo Ralph Lauren and DKNY in their own stores along Palm Passage. Nicole Miller is on Main Street at Palm Passage. Tommy Hilfiger has a store on the Waterfront at Royal Dane Mall. The two stores below carry a variety of top-name designers.

Cosmopolitan caters to repeat customers looking for labels such as Gottex of Israel, Bally of Switzerland and Paul & Shark of Italy. Shoes, handbags and men's and women's upscale fashions and beachwear are displayed in the two-level shop on the Waterfront at Drake's Passage, ☎ 776-2040.

Janine's Boutique still is considered a well-kept secret by stylish men and women who have patronized her shop for more than 20 years. They come to save 20-30% off US prices on their favorite designer wear

from YSL, Cardin, St. John and Escada. Discover the secret among the other designer shops on the west side of Palm Passage, ☎ 774-8243.

Fun Clothes

Local Color shows off wearable art. Popular Jams World prints and hand-painted originals by local artists such as Sloop Jones fill the store. Men, women and children are sure to find the perfect island design to bring home as a souvenir. Located in Hibiscus Alley, midway between Main and Waterfront, ☎ 774-3727.

Perfume

Tropicana Perfume Shoppe will solve all your problems with which fragrance to buy at the best price. The skilled staff at this outlet will guide you through a huge stock of famous-name perfumes, colognes and aftershaves, including Dior, Chanel and Estee Lauder. The shop also sells cosmetics and skin care products in brands such as Clinique, Clarins and Lancôme. Browse through the historical building on the north side of Main Street across from Colombian Emeralds. ☎ 774-0010 or 800-233-7948.

Jewelry

Pierre's offers unusual colored gemstones from around the world such as pink and red spinels, yellowish sphenes from Madagascar and green tsavorite from Tanzania. You must see these exquisite gems to appreciate their unique beauty. Visit at 24 Palm Passage, ☎ 776-5130 or 800-300-0634.

Okidanokh Goldcraft creates original gold and silver jewelry by hand. This is the place to come if you want something special. Look for the quiet shop toward the back of Royal Dane Mall, ☎ 774-9677.

Blue Carib Gems and Rocks features hand-fashioned jewelry made from beautiful Caribbean gemstones. Canadian Alan O'Hara left the ice and snow in 1952 to come to paradise in search of natural treasures. Today his store in Charlotte Amalie sells extraordinary jewelry and sculpture from his finds all over the world. You can watch the artisans cut and polish the stones before they craft them into jewelry made using the lost-wax process. (The guy in the cutoffs and beard is Alan.) Everything is sold with a lifetime guarantee and backed by an impressive

list of official organizations. The store is across from Bakery Square at 2 Back Street, ☎ 774-8525.

Leather

Leather Shop stocks a large variety of imported purses, wallets, briefcases and belts with labels such as De Vecchi, Fendi and Il Bisonte. Expect to pay high prices for this top-quality merchandise, but less than in the States. You'll find some inexpensive items as well, and there are real bargains on the sale table. Located at 1 Main Street, a block west of the post office, ☎ 776-0290.

Linens

Mr. Tablecloth is the place to find imported tablecloths, place mats, runners and bed linens. Jeannie, the owner, searches for the best quality products made of cotton, Irish linen, poly-blends and organdy, and carries a wide range of sizes. Expect to pay about half of US retail prices. While linens are the obvious draw here, take a look at the handmade dresses and children's outfits. The shop is at 6 Main Street across from Hibiscus Alley, ☎ 774-4343.

Newspapers & Magazines

Island Newsstand sells magazines and newspapers from the States along with novels, travel guides and snacks. Find it on the south side of the Grand Hotel complex across from Emancipation Park, ☎ 774-0043.

Music

Parrot Fish has reggae, steel drum and other Caribbean sounds along with popular music from the US and Europe. A CD of island music makes a great souvenir. You'll remember the warm sun when you play it again and again on cold winter nights at home. Pick up your favorite tunes at 2 Store Tvaer Gade and Backstreet, ☎ 776-4514.

Around the Island

Havensight Mall is an outdoor complex near the West Indian Dock. It was constructed for the convenience of cruise-ship passengers and its 60 shops include many of those found in the main shopping area in Charlotte Amalie. While the prices are the same, the in-town shops usually have more inventory. Avid shoppers will want to go into town,

others will want to do a high-speed pass through Havensight before they hit the beach.

In addition to the expected retailers, you'll find an ATM machine, pay phones, a post office, tourist information and a grocery mart. A few stores that are not found in town and are worthy of a visit include:

Music Shoppe, owned by former state-side DJ Norman Grey. The store offers all types of music and musical instruments, including steel drums and steel pan music. There are private listening stations where you can listen to tapes and CDs before you buy. ☎ 774-1900; fax 777-1753.

Pusser's Closeout Store gives great savings on merchandise from Pusser's Tropical & Nautical Stores located in A.H. Riise Alleyway in Charlotte Amalie and in the British Virgin Islands. The high-quality products include casual outdoor clothing, shorts, shirts and island-style dresses. The store is actually across the highway from the mall. ☎ 774-9680.

Dockside Bookshop is the place to stop for best-selling hardbacks and popular paperbacks. You'll also find travel guides, cookbooks and historical or fictional books written by Caribbean authors. ☎ 774-4937.

Red Hook

Shops and restaurants line both sides of the main street (Route 32) that runs through Red Hook and past the dock where ferries leave for St. John. You don't need directions or an address since all storefronts face a short stretch of road. American Yacht Harbor is on the water side. Red Hook Plaza is across the road. You also can enter many of the waterside businesses from the harbor walkway.

Chris Sawyer Diving Store, American Yacht Harbor, has beachwear and diving gear. ☎ 777-7804.

Marina Market, Red Hook Plaza, is possibly the best, but not the largest, upscale grocery store on the island. They also make fresh take-out food. ☎ 779-2411.

The Color of Joy, American Yacht Harbor, is owned by an artist and full of local artwork. The hand-painted birdhouses and island-style sarongs make great gifts or souvenirs. ☎ 775-4020.

Elizabeth James, American Yacht Harbor, has handcrafted jewelry, including the unique Crucian Hook Bracelet, which is made in St. Croix. Fine evening wear and washable silks make up the small top-quality clothing selection. ☎ 779-1595.

Unusual Artwork Off The Beaten Track

Art lovers will want to make side trips to three outstanding sites that offer something special.

Tillett Gardens in the Tutu Estates across from Kmart on Route 38 is a real treat. This shady artists' complex was created from an old Danish farm by the now-deceased artist Jim Tillett in 1959. Studios, galleries, workshops and restaurants surround the tree-filled natural garden where iguanas wander in search of Hibiscus-flower snacks.

You can watch the artists and craftsmen at work on projects that include paintings, silk-screen, stained glass, pottery and jewelry. Prices are terrific. Quality is top-notch. The ambience is calm, quiet and cool – a welcome break from the downtown bustle. Ask about the special arts and music festivals that are held in the gardens several times each year. Tillett Garden is open Monday through Saturday, 9 am until 5 pm, ☎ 775-1929, www.tillett.net; e-mail tillett@islands.vi.

Kilnworks Pottery & Art Gallery is owned by artist Peggy Seiwert who turns out dozens of pottery designs, including ceramic fountains in tropical shapes. The gallery also exhibits works by other well-known local artists and sculptors, and a working pottery studio is on-site. Call about special workshops and exhibits. The gallery is open Monday to Saturday, 9 am until 5 pm, at its location on Route 38/Smith Bay Road on the northeast shore between Wyndham Sugar Bay and Renaissance Grand Beach Resorts. Watch for the big green iguana holding the sign. ☎ 775-3979.

Mango Tango exhibits a large assortment of work by the most popular international artists. It also hosts a one-man show each month. Every artist represented at the spacious gallery spends at least some of their time in the Virgin Islands each year. The list includes such names as Don Dahlke, Max Johnson, Dana Wylder and Anne Miller. If you're looking for a specific Caribbean artist, chances are good that you'll find

them here. Selections include both originals and prints, most depicting island scenes. Find the colorful shop in the Al Cohen Mall at the top of Raphune Hill across from Havensight Mall. ☎ 777-3060.

Where to Stay

St. Thomas has a complete range of accommodations from quaint city inns to luxurious ocean-side resorts. You may choose to stay in or near Charlotte Amalie and be in the center of local activity with easy access to shopping, tourist attractions and great restaurants. Or, you may prefer to check into an all-inclusive resort and be pampered without ever having to leave the property. There are many options.

The following listings are recommended as the best of their class based on location, price and facilities. Rates reflect the cost of a standard double room for two people in high season. During low-season, generally from April 15 through December 14, rates drop 25-50%. Expect to pay an additional 8% tax year-round.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART	
The following price scale is used as a guideline for rates charged for a double room per night. All prices are given in US dollars.	
$	$75 or less
$$	$76-125
$$$	$126-200
$$$$	More than $200

***NOTE**: The area code on St. Thomas is 340.*

Rental Agencies

If you want to rent a condo, villa or private home, contact one of the following companies:

- **Paradise Properties Condos**, PO Box 9395, St. Thomas, USVI 00801. ☎ 779-1540 or 800-524-2038; fax 779-6109.
- **Calypso Realty**, PO Box 12178, St. Thomas, VI 00801. ☎ 774-1620 or 800-747-4858; fax 774-1634.
- **Beach Tops,** 6501 Red Hook Plaza, Suite 71, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 775-4110 or 775-0377; fax 775-0377; www.beachtops.com; e-mail info@beachtops.com.
- **McLaughlin Anderson Villas**, 100 Blackbeard's Hill, Suite 3, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-537-6246 or 776-0635; fax 777-4737.
- **Island Destinations**, 1875 Palmer Ave., Larchmont, NY 10538. ☎ 800-942-5499; fax 914-833-3318; www.islanddestinations.com.
- **Caribbean Villas on the Web**, www.cvillas.com; e-mail info@cvillas.com.
- **Caribbean Destinations** ☎ 800-888-0897; fax 504-834-7023; www.caribbeandest.com; e-mail island@caribbeandest.com.

Charlotte Amalie & Vicinity

Bluebeard's Castle, PO Box 7480, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI 00801. ☎ 800-524-6599 or 800-344-5771; fax 774-5134. 179 rooms and suites. $$$.

Sitting at the top of a hill overlooking the city and harbor, Bluebeard's Castle is part timeshare condos and part resort hotel, so rooms come in a variety of sizes. The grounds are lovely and the old tower that serves as the focal point for the resort adds a Pirates-of-the-Caribbean ambience. As one of the oldest structures on the island, Bluebeard's Tower is surrounded by tales of pirates, who are said to have used the lofty perch as a lookout and hideout between 1700 and 1718 – and may have buried discarded wives, slaughtered foes or captured booty under the stones (see below).

Despite the advanced age of the stone tower, the hotel is modern and in good-as-new condition. Each unit is furnished in rattan, decorated in bright island colors and outfitted with cable TV and refrigerators. The floors are cool ceramic tile and all rooms have ceiling fans as well as air conditioning. Suites are roomy and have well-equipped kitchens.

A complimentary shuttle transports guests over the hill to the beach on Magen's Bay, and the on-site pool has terrific views of Charlotte Amalie and the harbor. The resort is busy, even in low season, and there are plenty of activities to keep guests busy. Facilities include two tennis courts, a fitness center, gift shops, three restaurants and a bar with nightly entertainment. Golfers may arrange to play at nearby Mahogany Run. Ferries leave from town for St. John and Tortola.

PIRATE CASTLES

Bluebeard's and Blackbeard's castles dominate their own hills above Charlotte Amalie. Both are now luxurious hotels, but when they were built about 1680, they served as watchtowers for the island's natural harbor. There's no proof that pirates later used the towers for their personal business, and it's unlikely that any pirate actually lived in the castles. However, the thick-walled fortifications inspire all kinds of legends, and since secrecy surrounds the lives of these outlaws, some of the stories actually may be true. It is known that Blackbeard's was originally called Skytsborg (Danish for skyhill) and Bluebeard's was named Smitsberg (Smits' Hill) in honor of the island's governor when the tower was built.

The Inn at Blackbeard's Castle, PO Box 6227, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI 00804. ☎ 800-344-5771 or 776-1234; fax 776-4321. 20 rooms and suites. $$$.

New owners have turned this historic site into a marvelous boutique hotel. Built around the hilltop ruins of the stone watchtower at Skytsborg Castle, the lemon-yellow inn has stunning views and elegant rooms. Each room and suite is individually decorated and furnished with oversized four-poster and sleigh-style beds. Fine linens, dark woods, ceiling fans and French doors opening onto private terraces give the rooms an intimate old-world touch. Air conditioning, contemporary bathrooms and cable TV provide modern comforts. A large swimming pool sits at the foot of Skytsborg Tower, offering sunbathers a top-of-the-world view, and a second smaller pool provides more privacy. The open-air restaurant serves a variety of international and island-inspired cuisine, and the romantic piano bar stays open until 12:30 am. Complimentary continental breakfast each morning.

Best Western Emerald Beach Resort, 8070 Lindbergh Bay, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-233-4936 or 777-8800; fax 776-3426. 90 rooms. $$$.

If you want to stay near the airport, this Polynesian-like retreat is a good choice. It's right on the beach, has a waterfall swimming pool and a tennis court, and the seaside restaurant is open for every meal. All rooms are air-conditioned and have ceiling fans, refrigerators and coffee makers. A smaller sister resort, **Best Western Carib Beach**, ☎ 774-2525, $$, is nearby. Both are popular with business people because of the location between the airport and town. Unless a convention is booked, you may have the resort facilities all to yourself on weekdays.

Hotel 1829, Government Hill, PO Box 1567, St. Thomas, USVI 00804. ☎ 800-524-2002 or 776-1829; fax 776-4313. 15 rooms and suites. $$.

This Spanish-style national historic site is named for the year it was completed by a French sea captain. Over the years, modern conveniences have been tucked into the old stone walls, and the multilevel inn is one of the leading small hotels in the Caribbean. It features high-ceilinged rooms with paddle fans, air conditioning, antique tiles, private baths, spectacular views and cable TV. Rooms surround a flower-filled courtyard that's been outfitted with a tiny swimming pool. A perfect blending of old and new. Even if you don't stay here, stop for a drink in the Dutch-kitchen bar or have dinner in the award-winning restaurant.

Mafolie Hotel, 7091 Estate Mafolie, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-225-7035 or 774-2790; fax 774-4091. 23 rooms. $.

It's not fancy. In fact, the rooms and baths could be considered barebones basic, but the price is great and the views are spectacular. Mafolie sits 800 feet up in the hills above Charlotte Amalie with a dramatic panorama of the harbor. Stay here if you like small inns that are owned and operated by a family and have lots of personality. Guests gather poolside each morning for a light complimentary breakfast, then take the free shuttle to Magen's Bay Beach or hang around the pool enjoying snacks and drinks from the bar. Shoppers take a quick cab ride into town. The hotel's restaurant, Lindy's, is an island favorite.

Marriott Morning Star Beach & Frenchman's Reef Resorts, PO Box 7100, St. Thomas, USVI 00801. ☎ 800-524-2000 or 776-8500; fax 776-3054; e-mail resorts@marriott.vi. 504 units. $$$$.

These two resorts are located three miles east of Charlotte Amalie and can be reached by complimentary ferry service that runs hourly between the harbor and the Frenchman's Reef dock. Although Marriott owns the adjoining properties, each is unique.

Morning Star has 96 spacious units in five three-story island-style buildings directly on the beach. Rattan furniture, tropical colors and large terraces make these luxurious rooms some of the best on the island. Guests here get little extras such as fresh flowers and champagne on arrival, terry robes and nightly turn-down service.

Frenchman's Reef is a sprawling 406-room highrise perched dramatically on a cliff above the Caribbean across the bay from downtown Charlotte Amalie. Two-level suites are located on the top floors. All the rooms are typical of Marriott resorts in the states – nice, but no real surprises. The fantastic facilities and luxurious amenities are the attention-getters.

Both resorts have their own check-in desk, pools and restaurants. In addition, Frenchman's Reef has a watersports center which schedules scuba, snorkeling and fishing expeditions, and a full health club and spa. Together, there are three pools, four tennis courts, five restaurants and six bars.

East End

Unfortunately, you won't find an inexpensive beachfront hotel on the island's east end during high season. However, if you come during the summer, even the most luxurious resorts will offer you a room at a discount of up to 50%. Another money-saving suggestion is to rent a villa or condo with a kitchen so you can prepare some meals yourself. This is especially economical if you have children. Also, consider sharing accommodations with friends. Multi-bedroom units are very affordable when the cost is split among several people.

Bolongo Bay Beach Club & Villas, 7150 Estate Bolongo, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-524-4746 or 775-1800; fax 775-3208; www.bolongo.com; e-mail bolongobeach@worldnet.att.net. 75 rooms and 20 villas. $$$.

The Doumeng family has owned and operated this informal resort on the south shore for more than 25 years. Repeat guests call it "Club Everything" because it packs two restaurants, three pools, a watersports center, health club, tennis courts, sand volleyball courts and a couple of basketball courts into eight acres set directly on a shady stretch of Caribbean beach. Guest choose between European, semi-inclusive and all-inclusive rates. Those who go for the top package get all meals, unlimited drinks and some water excursions. Don't come here expecting luxury. Bolongo's accommodations and facilities are geared toward the barefoot crowd who wants to lay back and have fun.

Ritz-Carlton, 6900 Great Bay, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-241-3333 or 775-3333; fax 775-4444; www.ritzcarlton.com. 152 rooms and suites. $$$$.

The name just about says it all. Elegance. Grandeur. Opulence. It looks like a palace in Venice, with 15 acres of lavish landscaping, a daydream swimming pool that seems to merge with the sea, and six three-story Renaissance-style buildings housing sumptuous guest rooms with marble baths. The estate sits on a half-mile strand of white-sand beach that offers a variety of watersports. In addition, there are four lighted tennis courts and a full-service health club and spa. This splurge is definitely worth it.

Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort, 6500 Estate Smith Bay, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-WYNDHAM or 777-7100; fax 777-7200; www.travelweb.com. 300 rooms. $$$$.

The rates are high, but everything is included, so this newly-updated resort may fit into a moderate budget – especially if you bring the kids. Nicely appointed spacious rooms are in a two-tiered low-rise complex on a hill above the secluded beach that offers every type of water sport. On a typical day, you may drop the little ones at Kids Klub, workout in the fitness center, then lounge by one of the three pools or get in a game of tennis before lunch. All meals and drinks are complimentary at the two restaurants and three bars.

Renaissance Grand Beach Resort, Smith Bay Road, PO Box 8267, St. Thomas, USVI 00801. ☎ 800-421-8188 or 775-1510; fax 775-2185; www.renaissancehotels.com. 290 rooms and suites. $$$$.

This popular resort bustles with activity, but somehow never seems crowded or hectic. It sits on a superb piece of beach on the island's north shore with a watersports center and dive shop. Spacious rooms and suites are located in two- , three- and four-level buildings scattered on a hill behind the beach. Each has a patio or balcony and is outfitted with high-quality furniture and luxurious décor. Club Gecko keeps the kids busy while adults enjoy two swimming pools, six lighted tennis courts and a full-service fitness center. Two restaurants, a casual café and three bars make it possible for guests to spend their entire vacation right on the hotel grounds, but the on-site rental car service is handy for those who want to explore the island.

Elysian Beach Resort, 6800 Estate Nazareth, St. Thomas, USVI 00802. ☎ 800-753-2554 or 775-1000; fax 776-0910. 180 rooms and suites. $$$$.

You can't beat the location of this eight-acre beachfront resort. The Ritz-Carlton and St. Thomas Yacht Club are neighbors, and Red Hook is a mile away. Nicely decorated rooms and one- and two-bedroom suites are situated in low-rise buildings that stretch up a steep hill behind Cowpet Bay. A magnificent crescent-shaped beach features all types of watersports, and lush landscaping surrounds the tennis court, waterfall swimming pool and health club. Car rental, golf, multi-island tours and diving or fishing excursions can be booked through the hotel. Don't miss Sunday brunch at the Palm Court Restaurant.

Where to Eat

You can eat extremely well in St. Thomas. Many great cooks choose to live on the island and create marvelous meals from the bounty of fresh seafood and local produce. However, you'll pay big-city prices for dinner at resort and upscale restaurants. Lunch is less expensive, and you can find excellent moderately-priced meals at casual cafés, bakeries and delis. (See page 34 for a listing of common West Indian specialties found at restaurants.)

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Restaurants often change their hours during low season, so call to check.*

The following suggestions are a mix of restaurants in various price ranges. Most are located in or near Charlotte Amalie and neighboring Frenchtown, or in Red Hook. In addition, every resort has at least one full-service restaurant and, usually, a beachside or poolside snack bar that serves sandwiches and light meals.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and tip. There's no tax on meals.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-20
$$$	$21-35
$$$$	More than $35

NOTE: *The area code for St. Thomas is 340.*

Charlotte Amalie

Virgilio's, 18 Dronningens Gade/Main Street (enter on Store Tvaer between Main and Back Streets), ☎ 776-4920. Italian. $$$$. Open Monday-Saturday, 11:30 am-10:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

Stained glass set in exposed-brick walls. Cozy tables under crystal chandeliers. Soft music and rich aromas. If you're looking for an elegant and romantic dinner, this is the place. Patrons say owner Virgilio del Mare serves the best Northern Italian cuisine in the Virgin Islands. Specialties include a saffron-flavored seafood mix, ravioli stuffed with lobster, chicken cacciatore and 40 homemade pasta dishes. Top off your meal with a cup of superb cappuccino.

Hervé, Government Hill, ☎ 777-9703. American/French. $$$. Open Monday-Saturday, 11:30 am-3 pm and 6 pm-10 pm; Sunday, 6 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

Hervé Chassin opened his own restaurant after years of experience working in the best kitchens on the island. He's been praised in many publications for his culinary skills, and his restaurant is considered one of the finest in the Virgin Islands. The hillside setting offers breathtaking views of the town. Start with escargot Provençal, progress to seafood, steak, lamb or venison, and finish with a slice of passionfruit cheesecake. There's an excellent wine list and the bartender makes a fabulous martini.

Gladys' Café, Royal Dane Mall, ☎ 774-6604. Island specialties. $$. Monday-Thursday, 6:30 am-3 pm; Friday, 6:30 am-midnight; Saturday, 6:30-3 pm; Sunday, 8 am-2 pm. Credit cards accepted.

Before you hit the shops, fortify yourself with a hearty breakfast at this friendly café. Try Gladys' thick French toast or freshly baked bread with jam. When you stop for lunch, choose from island specialties such as conch in butter sauce and hot chicken salad, or go American with a hamburger. Friday evenings, the café stays open for dinner, followed with entertainment by a live jazz band.

LUNCH SPOTS

For a lunch break in Charlotte Amalie, try **The Greenhouse** ($$), ☎ 774-7998, on Waterfront at Store Tvaer Gade near Chase Bank (also open for breakfast), or **Bumpa's** ($), ☎ 776-5674, on Waterfront at Cardow's Walk near Diamonds International.

Frenchtown

Frenchtown, the close-in western suburb of Charlotte Amalie, has a selection of good restaurants and bars that are especially popular after dark. To reach the neighborhood by car, drive west on Waterfront Highway and turn left (south) at the first stop light past the pink-and-white post office.

Craig and Sally's, 22 Honduras, Frenchtown, ☎ 777-9949. Eclectic/Gourmet. $$$. Open Wednesday-Friday, 11:30 am-3 pm and 5:30 pm-10 pm; Saturday-Sunday, 5:30 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

A meal at this creative little restaurant is so much fun, you'll want to return again and again. Twenty types of wine are available by the glass; Craig, the connoisseur, will help you decide which ones to try. He stocks more than 200 selections from around the world and enjoys talking about his favorites. Sally, the chef, concocts a different dinner menu each night based on the freshest available ingredients. She might feature stuffed fish or grilled filet mignon or pasta topped with a freshly made sauce. There are always several main-course choices, but some folks make a meal out of the appetizers. Save room for a homemade dessert.

Planet Villa Olga, Frenchtown, ☎ 774-4262. Steaks and seafood. $$$$. Open daily, 5:30 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Ask for a table right at the water's edge when you dine on the terrace of this historic villa, which was a popular gambling hall and upscale bordello during the island's buccaneer days. Plan to arrive when the bar opens at 5:30, so you can enjoy a drink while you watch the sun set. At dinner you can expect fine cuisine. Specialties include asparagus and shrimp-stuffed swordfish with Caribbean salsa and rum-seared mahi-mahi with tropical fruits.

LUNCH SPOTS

For a quick lunch or snack, stop by the **Frenchtown Deli & Coffee Shop** (☎ 776-7211, $) at the Frenchtown Mall for a cup of Green Mountain coffee and a bagel or sandwich. They make their own bread and you can take out or eat there. Open Monday-Friday, 6 am-10 pm; Saturday, 6 am-5 pm; and Sunday, 9 am-5 pm.

Red Hook

A string of fine restaurants and casual cafés line both sides of Route 32, which runs through Red Hook. The area bustles with activity because of the ferry dock and charter boat operations, and the little town really starts hopping after dark.

Café Wahoo ($$$) and **East End Sushi & Tempura Bar** ($$), Piccola Marina/American Yacht Harbor, ☎ 775-6350. This single establishment changes from a Japanese-style bistro at lunchtime to an upscale Euro-Carib restaurant in the evening. East End Sushi is open Monday-Saturday, 11:30 am-3 pm. Café Wahoo is open daily, 6-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations highly recommended for dinner.

Ultra-fresh fish is the catalyst that makes this split-personality restaurant so excellent. Owner Bruce McGiaty, a European-trained chef, proudly opens the door to his walk-in refrigerator to display glistening whole fish waiting to be cut into serving portions. At lunch time, the catch is used in sushi and tempura. In the evening, it becomes the focal point of creative gourmet dinners. Katja, Bruce's charming German wife, presides over the open-air dining room that's perched above Vessup Bay. Dinner patrons enjoy a splendid selection of entrées that include Caribbean wahoo encrusted with island spices, sea prawns flambéed in gin cream sauce with fettuccine, and Caribbean lobster teamed with filet of Black Angus beef. In addition, there are pastas, chicken and lamb. At lunch, the menu includes vegetarian and seafood rolls, tempura, sushi and salads.

Molly Malone's ($) Irish pub (downstairs) and **Whale of a Tale** ($$$), a seafood restaurant (upstairs), are in one waterfront location at American Yacht Harbor, ☎ 775-1270. Molly Malone's is open Sunday-Thursday, 7 am-1 am; Friday-Saturday, 7 am-2 am. Whale of a Tale is open daily from 5 pm to midnight. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for Whale of a Tale.

Owner Frank Brittingham, who also owns **Finn McCool's** ($$) at Compass Point Marina (☎ 775-6194), is the Irish connection on St. Thomas. A board set up beside the bar at Molly Malone's keeps track of the number of days until St. Patrick's Day, and such things as shepherd's pie and ham 'n cabbage are featured on the menu. Upstairs, the new Whale of a Tale restaurant serves select-your-own seafood from a display of freshly-caught Caribbean lobsters and yellowfin tuna. While the downstairs Irish Yacht Club is casual and lively, the upstairs is quiet and cozy with rich dark woods and nautical décor. If you don't care for Irish pub food or seafood, both restaurants also serve a wide variety of steaks and pastas, and you can order burgers and such at Molly's. Be sure to ask about the homemade sweets.

Duffy's Love Shack, Red Hook Plaza, ☎ 779-2080. Eclectic. $$. Open daily, 11:30 am-2 am. No credit cards.

Don't worry about not being able to find this rocking, bubbling, green-shuttered island hut. It sits in the parking lot diagonally across from the ferry dock, and if the blaring music doesn't get your attention, the crowd will. Locals and visitors repeatedly vote it *Favorite Bar* in yearly polls, and it's been featured on TV shows and in stateside publications. The bartenders create concoctions such as "Lime in Dee Coconut" and "Love Potion Number 9" and serve them up in wacky containers that you take home. The famous "Love Shack Volcano" is a 50-ounce frozen blend that's brought to you flaming in a huge bowl and serves up to four brave drinkers. Food selections are things such as steaks, ribs, burgers and tacos. Everything's fresh and fun, but most people come here for the drinks and the festivity. Almost every night has some sort of theme, and patrons often linger well into the early morning hours dancing on table tops, entering contests to win prizes, and just hangin'.

LUNCH SPOTS

Grateful Deli (☎ 775-5160, $), in the same parking lot as Duffy's, is the place for vegetarian meals, outstanding sandwiches, made-to-order omelettes and fresh salads. Open Monday-Friday, 7 am-5 pm; Saturday, 7 am-4 pm; Sunday, 8 am-2 pm.

Around the Island

These three restaurants are too good to miss.

Polli's, Tillett Gardens on Route 38, ☎ 775-4550. Mexican. $$. Open Monday-Saturday, 11:30 am-10:30 pm. Credit cards accepted.

Try this unique restaurant, even if you don't care for Mexican food. It sits in a cool, shady garden surrounded by artists' studios and galleries. Relax on the patio, sip a frozen Cuervo margarita (they're a dollar off during happy hour from 4:30 to 6:30), and munch chips and salsa while you watch big iguanas lumbering about in search of fallen fruits and vegetables. Owner Donna Smith heads up a friendly staff that goes the extra step to make customers happy. Meals are authentic and well prepared, and the seasoning can be adjusted to match your heat tolerance. If you prefer something American, the menu also lists a selection of chicken, steaks and burgers. Order fried ice cream or an apple *chimi* (something like a Mexican fried pie) for dessert.

Eunice's Terrace, Route 38 (east of the Route 388 turnoff leading to Coki Point), ☎ 775-3975. Island specialties. $$$. Monday-Saturday, 11 am-10 pm; Sunday, 5 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted.

When you first spot this ordinary-looking two-story building with goats running around in the yard, you'll wonder why President Clinton and Hillary chose to eat a late dinner here during their island visit in 1997. The answer is in the mouthwatering West Indian food prepared by owner Eunice Best. While the President dined on a fish dish called Old Wife, you may want to try the conch fritters or conch steamed in a sauce made of lime, onion, garlic and butter. Both are popular specialties. Other menu favorites include the huge combination seafood platter and surf & turf. Interesting side dishes such as West Indian stuffing and *fungi*, an okra and cornmeal mixture, round out the meals. Don't leave without a slice of rum cake or sweet potato pie.

The Agavé Terrace, Point Pleasant Resort, #4 Smith Bay (Route 38), ☎ 775-4142, Seafood. $$$. Open nightly, 6 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Greg and Daniela Miller own this elegant award-winning restaurant tucked into a lush hillside garden with breathtaking views of St. John. Arrive early to enjoy a drink on the terrace or at the indoor bar that of-

fers a panoramic view of the ocean. Then check out the catch-of-the-day choices written on a blackboard at the entrance (the kitchen also will prepare your catch from a deep-sea fishing trip). You can elect to have your selection cooked one of five ways and served with one of 11 sauces. Chicken, steak and pasta round out the menu. All dinners begin with a salad, tossed at your table, and include freshly baked bread and a choice of rice or pasta. A steel pan band plays on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays beginning at 7 pm.

Fungi's on the Beach (formerly The Bayside Café), ☎ 775-4142. $. This is Agavé's casual waterfront sibling. Head here after a hot afternoon in the sun for a local microbrew or one of their signature tropical drinks. The open-air café serves burgers, sandwiches and salads between 11 am and 10 pm. The Suckling Pig Roast starts at 6 pm, and the nightly dancing and entertainment begins around 7 pm. Located on the beach at Point Pleasant Resort, just south of the Renaissance Grand Beach Resort on Route 38.

Nightlife

Unfortunately, St. Thomas has some problems with crime. It's a good idea to take a cab or drive your own car when you go out in the evening, and many visitors prefer to stay out of Charlotte Amalie after dark. Don't hesitate to go directly to a restaurant or club in town, but avoid strolling along the narrow, poorly-lighted streets.

Frenchtown is somewhat safer, but be cautious about walking along dark or isolated roads. Red Hook tends to be jumping every night, especially during high season, and you can always find a crowd at **Duffy's Love Shack** (☎ 779-2080) and **Molly Malone's** (☎ 775-1270). **Big Kahuna Bar and Grill** (☎ 715-1442) and **The Caribbean Saloon** (☎ 775-7060), both at the American Yacht Harbor, are open until 4 am.

Pick up a free copy of *St. Thomas This Week* and check out the entertainment and events listed on the inside of the back cover. Most resorts and many restaurants and bars feature live music and shows each week, so there's something going on every night. If you enjoy art and theater, call **The Reichhold Center for the Arts** (☎ 693-1550) to find out what's scheduled during your visit.

■ Island Facts & Numbers

AIRPORT: Cyril E. King International Airport ☎ 774-5100.

AREA CODE: The area code for all US Virgin Islands is 340. You may dial direct from the States.

BANKS, ATMs: Most banks are open Monday-Thursday, 9 am-2:30 pm and Friday from 9:30 am-2 pm and 3:30 pm-5 pm. ATMs are available 24 hours per day at the airport and Havensight cruise-ship dock. The following banks also have ATMs: **Citibank**, Port of Sale Havensight ☎ 774-4800; **Bank of Nova Scotia**, Waterfront Highway in Charlotte Amalie ☎ 77-9383 (branches also at Havensight Mall and Tutu Park Mall); **Chase Manhattan Bank**, Waterfront Highway in Charlotte Amalie ☎ 775-7777 (branches also in Red Hook and at Tutu Park Mall).

DRIVING: Traffic stays to the left. The speed limit is 20 mph in towns and 35 mph in the countryside.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts, 60 cycles, as on the US mainland.

EMERGENCIES: Ambulance, ☎ 911; Fire Department, ☎ 911; Police, ☎ 911; St. Thomas Hospital, ☎ 776-8311; US Coast Guard Rescue, ☎ 776-3497; hyperbaric chamber for divers, ☎ 776-2686.

GOVERNMENT: The US Virgin Islands are an unincorporated territory with a non-voting delegate elected to the US House of Representatives. Anyone born on the islands is a US citizen.

LAUNDROMAT: La Providence behind Tutu Park Mall is open daily, 6 am-11 pm. ☎ 777-3747.

LIQUOR LAWS: The legal drinking age is 21, as on the US mainland. Minors may not enter bars or purchase liquor.

MONEY: The US dollar is the legal currency throughout the Virgin Islands. Travelers' checks and major credit cards are acceptable at most locations, but always carry some cash for smaller establishments.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES: The ***St. Thomas Daily News*** publishes an entertainment section each Friday. ***St. Thomas This Week***, ***USVI Playground*** and ***What To Do*** are free publications that are available at hotels and other tourist-oriented locations throughout the island.

POST OFFICE: US post offices are located on Main Street in Charlotte Amalie, and in Frenchtown, Havensight Mall, Sugar Estate and Tutu Mall. Stamps are priced the same as on the US mainland.

TAXES: There is no sales tax or departure tax. An 8% surcharge is added to all hotel bills.

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY INFORMATION: ☎ 913.

TOURIST INFORMATION: In the US, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Division of Tourism**, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 ☎ 800-372-USVI (800-372-8784) or 212-332-2222; fax 212-332-2223; e-mail info@usvi.net.

You also may get information from **The Caribbean Information Office**, ☎ 800-621-1270 (in the US); ☎ 847-699-7570 (outside the US); fax 847-699-7583, or from **The St. Thomas/St. John Hotel & Tourism Association**, PO Box 2300, Veterans Drive Station, St. Thomas, USVI 00803.

In Canada, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 3300 Bloor Street West, Suite 3120, Centre Tower, Toronto, Ontario M8X 2X3, ☎ 416-233-1414.

In the UK, contact **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 2 Cinnamon Row, Plantation Wharf, York Place, London, England SW11 3TW, ☎ 0171-978-5262; fax 0171/924-3171.

On St. Thomas, stop by the **Visitors' Information Center** and **Hospitality Lounge** across from Emancipation Park on Tolbod Gade. It's open Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm, and Saturday, 9 am-1pm. ☎ 774-8784; fax 774-4390. Another **Welcome Center** is set up at The Grand Hotel Court, north of Emancipation Park, near the post office. It's staffed by volunteers and open Monday-Saturday, 9 am-5 pm.

WEBSITES: www.usvi.net; www.st-thomas.com.

WEDDINGS: It's easy to get married in the USVI. For full details about the various requirements, call the Department of Tourism for a brochure called ***Getting Married in the United States Virgin Islands***, ☎ 800-372-USVI. To apply for a license, write to the Territorial Court of the Virgin Islands, Box 70, St. Thomas, USVI 00804, ☎ 340-774-6680.

St. John

Overview

St. John is the most "virgin" of the US Virgin Islands. Almost two-thirds of the 20-square-mile island is protected as a national park, which makes it a true paradise for nature lovers and outdoor adventurers.

The 5,000 people who live permanently on the island are united in their commitment to preserving St. John's unspoiled beauty and West Indian charm while offering tourists plenty of creature comforts. Eighteenth-century ruins and underwater coral gardens are rigorously safeguarded, and almost the entire shoreline is protected by the US Park Service. Yet, careful developers have managed to provide a wide selection of accommodations, restaurants and shops on the west end.

Cruz Bay is a small village that serves as the administrative capital and only real town on the island. The rest of St. John is made up of dense forests, steep hills and white-sand beaches bordering clear-to-the-bottom turquoise seas. Well-maintained roads run along most of the coast and cut through the interior to provide easy access to miles of hiking trails, excellent snorkeling and diving spots, and interesting historical sites.

Divers rate the underwater wrecks, reefs, caves and wildlife off St. John's shores among the best in the Caribbean. Visibility is normally good enough to allow snorkelers to view much of it from the surface, and the 225-foot underwater trail at **Trunk Bay** has signs identifying a variety of formations, fish and other sights. It's not unusual to spot sea turtles, rays and large schools of colorful fish near the shore.

A Brief History

St. John was a comparative late bloomer. Archeologists have found evidence of Indians living on the island as far back as 700 B.C., but by the time Europeans arrived, the island was deserted. Although the Danes settled St. Thomas in 1672 and laid claim to St. John three years later, they didn't begin colonization on the smaller island until 1717 when they established Coral Bay, on the east end, as a permanent port. By 1733, about 100 Dutch and Danish businessmen were operating thriving cotton, sugar and tobacco plantations on St. John with labor from more than a thousand black slaves.

Slavery

Slaves, of course, lived under appalling conditions and were expected to provide their own food by farming small patches of ground around their huts. Provisions were rarely abundant, but in 1733 a drought followed by a hurricane and infestation of insects badly damaged plantation crops and thoroughly destroyed the slaves' food supply. Desperate whites passed strict laws to control the hungry workers. Many slaves, faced with starvation and harsh treatment, deserted their owners and hid out in the dense forests where they survived by fishing and gathering fruit. Captured runaways, known as **maroons**, were severely punished or executed.

Finally, on November 23, 1733, the slaves rebelled and went on a killing spree. Their first victims were the island's top magistrate, John Reimert Sodtmann, and his 13-year-old stepdaughter. From the Sodtmann's plantation, they moved on to the fort at Coral Bay, where they killed the soldiers and then fired three cannon shots as a signal to other slaves to kill their plantation masters. The rebels quickly seized control of the island and maintained rule for six months.

Eventually, the uprising was squelched by troops from other islands, and plantations continued to run on slave labor until full emancipation was announced in 1848. Even before the slaves were freed, plantation owners were struggling because of decreased demand for their crops in Europe. After emancipation, both black and white residents settled into a bleak existence on small farms.

The Rockefeller Legacy

The US took control of St. John when it bought the western Virgin Islands, known as the **Danish West Indies**, from Denmark in 1917. However, little economic progress occurred until the 1950s. At that time, Laurance Rockefeller, son of wealthy American industrialist John D. Rockefeller, fell in love with the natural beauty of the island during a sailing vacation and decided to buy a huge section of the undeveloped land. He built Caneel Bay Resort on 170 acres, then donated the remainder of his holdings back to the government for development as a national park. President Dwight Eisenhower established the **Virgin Island National Park** in 1956, and the preserves now cover approximately two-thirds of the island.

NOTE: *The area code on St. John is 340.*

■ Getting There

Visitors to St. John arrive by boat, since there is no airport. Unless you have your a private boat, the simplest way to reach St. John is to fly to St. Thomas then take a ferry from either the Charlotte Amalie harbor or Red Hook.

By Ferry

From St. Thomas

Cruz Bay on St. John is only three miles across Pillsbury Sound from **Red Hook**, and ferries make the 20-minute trip every hour from 6 am until midnight. Schedules change, but normally the first ferry leaves Cruz Bay for St. Thomas at 6 am, and two early-morning ferries leave Red Hook for St. John at 6:30 am and 7:30 am, then hourly from 8 am ununtil midnight. At night, the last ferry leaves Cruz Bay at 11 pm, and the last ferry leaves Red Hook at midnight. One-way tickets cost $3 for adults and $1 for children under 12. Contact Transportation Services for information and schedule changes, ☎ 776-6282.

Ferries leave the harbor in **Charlotte Amalie** for Cruz Bay every two hours between 9 am and 4 pm, with an additional ferry departing at 5:30 pm. Ferries from Cruz Bay back to Charlotte Amalie leave every two hours between 7:15 am and 2:15, with an additional ferry departing at 3:45 pm. One-way tickets for the 45-minute trip cost $7. Schedules may change, so contact Transportation Services to verify the timetable, ☎ 776-6282.

Taxi fare from the airport on St. Thomas to Red Hook is $10 for one passenger and $6.50 per rider when two or more travel together. From the airport to the harbor in Charlotte Amalie, the taxi fare is $4.50 for one and $4 each for two or more passengers. Vitran city buses make the trip from the airport to town every 45 minutes between 6 am and 9:30 pm. Tickets are 75 cents. Country buses travel between Charlotte Amalie and Red Hook every hour beginning at 5:30 am from town and ending at 8:30 pm from Red Hook. Tickets are $1. Phone **Vitran** for the exact schedule, ☎ 774-5678.

From the BVI

If you're coming from the British Virgin Islands, Inter-Island Boat Services provides daily service between Cruz Bay and Tortola's West End. The crossing takes about 30 minutes and the one-way fare is $35. In addition, the ferry from St. Thomas to Jost Van Dyke stops to pick up and drop off passengers on St. John on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Service to Virgin Gorda is provided on Thursdays and Sundays. Call **Inter-Island Boat Services** for the exact schedule and fares, ☎ 776-6597 or 776-6282.

■ Getting Around

By Car

To see all of St. John it is a good idea to rent a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Good roads reach most of the island, but some of the best views and scenery are along dirt tracks. Representatives of car rental companies meet visitors at the ferry dock, so it's not hard to find wheels. However, in high season you should make a reservation, especially if you want to rent from a well-known company.

RENTAL CAR AGENCIES	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084 or 776-6374
Best Rent a Car of St. John	☎ 693-8177
C & C	☎ 693-8164
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3131 or 693-7580
O'Connor	☎ 776-6343; fax 779-4440
Paris	☎ 776-6171
Penn's Jeep Rental	☎ 776-6530
Spencer's Jeep Rental	☎ 888-776-6628 or 693-8784
St. John Car Rental	☎/fax 776-6103
Varlack	☎ 776-6412

Most companies have weekly and daily rates that range from $50 to $78 per day during the winter. You can usually bargain for a better rate during the summer season, so call several companies before you decide. Expect to pay about $13 per day extra for the collision-damage waiver, and be sure your own insurance covers you before you decline the waiver. Most companies require renters to be at least 25 years of age, with a valid drivers license and major credit card.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Remember that driving is on the left side of the road.*

By Bus

Vitran buses leave from the ferry dock at **Cruz Bay** on the west end for **Coral Bay** on the east end every hour on the half-hour. The cross-island trip takes about 45 minutes, and the buses return along the same route after they drop off riders. A one-way ticket is $1 for adults and 75¢ for children.

By Taxi

Taxi drivers meet passengers as they get off the ferry in Cruz Bay. In addition, you'll find cabs along the streets in town and at the hotels, restaurants and main attractions throughout the island.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Ride only in official taxis or vans. These can be identified by the letters "JP" on their license plates.*

The fare from Cruz Bay to Coral Bay, at the opposite end of the island, is $10 for one passenger, $12.50 for two passengers and $5 each for three or more passengers. Other fares vary but are regulated by the St. John Taxi Commission. You can always ask to see a rate card and agree on a fare before you enter the cab.

■ Touring the Island

Guided Tours

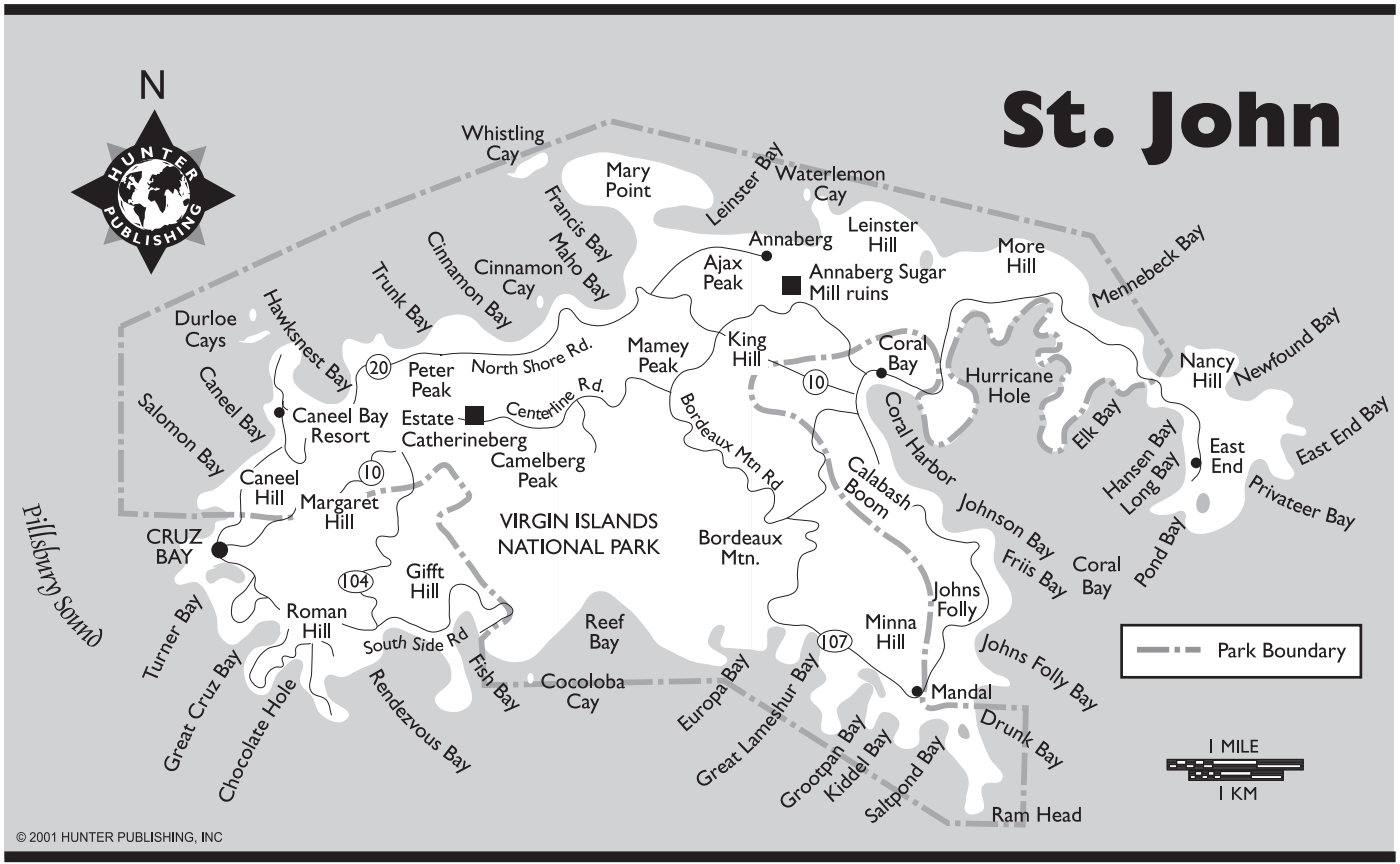
You can get an overview of the entire island on a two-hour guided tour. Driver/guides are easy to find near the ferry dock, and you can also request a guide from **St. John Taxi Services**, ☎ 693-7530. Expect to pay about $30 for up to two people or $12 per passenger for three or more in one cab.

Island-wide tours also are offered by: **Hospitality Guided Tours**✌ ☎ 693-9106; **Varlack Ventures**, ☎ 776-6412; **Wesley Easley Tour Bus,** ☎ 776-6282.

Independent Four-Wheel Drive Tour

The best way to explore St. John on your own is in an open-air four-wheel-drive vehicle that allows maximum visibility as you navigate back roads and steep hills. Although the island is only nine miles long, allow an entire day to cover the most interesting sites. You'll need several more days to hike in the **Virgin Islands National Park** and snorkel or dive the many extraordinary underwater sites.

Cruz Bay, on the west end of the island, is the logical starting point for any tour. Ferry boats from St. Thomas arrive at the dock here, and you can walk through the charming little town before you pick up your rental car. There are unique shops, funky bars and quirky restaurants along the main streets, and **Mongoose Junction** (see *Shopping* and *Where to Eat*) is a major tourist attraction. In addition, history and art enthusiasts enjoy the West Indian artifacts at the **Elaine Ione Sprauve Library and Museum**, and music lovers shouldn't miss the **Ivan Jadan Museum**.


St. John
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Whistling Cay
Mary Point
Leinster Bay
Waterlemon Cay
Francis Bay
Maho Bay
Annaberg
Leinster Hill
More Hill
Mennebeck Bay
Cinnamon Cay
Cinnamon Bay
Trunk Bay
Ajax Peak
Annaberg Sugar Mill ruins
Durloe Cays
Hawksnest Bay
20
Peter Peak
North Shore Rd.
Mamey Peak
King Hill
Coral Bay
Nancy Hill
Newfound Bay
Caneel Bay
Centerline Rd.
10
Hurricane Hole
Salomon Bay
Caneel Bay Resort
Estate Catherineberg
Bordeaux Mtn Rd
Coral Harbor
Elk Bay
Hansen Bay
Long Bay
East End
East End Bay
Caneel Hill
10
Camelberg Peak
Calabash Boom
Margaret Hill
VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
Johnson Bay
Privateer Bay
Pond Bay
CRUZ BAY
Bordeaux Mtn.
Friis Bay
Coral Bay
Pillsbury Sound
104
Gifft Hill
Johns Folly
Roman Hill
Reef Bay
Minna Hill
107
Johns Folly Bay
Turner Bay
South Side Rd
Park Boundary
Great Cruz Bay
Fish Bay
Cocoloba Cay
Europa Bay
Mandal
Chocolate Hole
Rendezvous Bay
Great Lameshur Bay
Drunk Bay
Grootpan Bay
Kiddel Bay
Saltpond Bay
Ram Head
1 MILE
1 KM
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

The **Elaine Ione Sprauve Library and Museum of Cultural Arts** is located in the restored greathouse of Estate Enighed (EN-ee-high), which was established about 1750 and became a major source of sugar production on St. John. The estate's first owner, an Englishman named William Wood, is buried in the cemetery behind the museum. A fire destroyed much of the original building early in the 20th century, and the ruins changed ownership but remained uninhabited for many years. In 1976, the site was admitted to the National Register of Historic Places and refurbished as a library and museum. Named in honor of the late Elaine Ione Sprauve for her contributions to the government of St. John and the people of the Virgin Islands, the building now houses a permanent collection of historical artifacts as well as rotating exhibits of local art. It's located on the east end of the business center in Cruz Bay, on Route 104, and is free. Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 776-6359.

The **Ivan Jadan (Zhadan) Museum** pays tribute to the greatest Russian tenor of the 20th century. Jadan was the premier lyric tenor of the Bolshoi Theater from 1928 until 1941, when he became the first major artist dissident to escape Stalin's reign of terror. He spent his last 40 years on St. John; his wife, Doris Jadan, has created this museum to honor him. It holds a cross-cultural collection of Russian and English artifacts, including more than 5,000 photographs, videos, documents and books. Music lovers will enjoy listening to Jadan's recorded musical performances, especially his *Songs of the Heart* CD that was released after his death in 1995. Find the museum south of the ferry dock off Bay Street on Genip/Frangipani Lane. It's open Monday-Saturday, 9 am-11 am and 4 pm-6 pm. ☎ 776-6423; fax 779-4323.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Pick up maps and island information at the **Tourist Center** between the clinic and the post office just north of the park across from the ferry dock in Cruz Bay, ☎ 776-6450. The **Virgin Islands National Park Service Visitor Center** is across from Mongoose Junction off North Shore Road in the northern section of the bay known as **The Creek**. Here you'll find a variety of information about park activities including ranger-led hikes and tours. The center is open daily, 8 am-4:30 pm. ☎ 776-6201.

When you're ready to leave Cruz Bay, take **Route 10 (Centerline Road)** heading east into the national park. You'll have fabulous views

as you drive along the mountain ridge that runs east/west through the island. A couple of miles outside of town, just past the Community Health Center, watch for a newly paved road called John's Head Road (Route 206) that leads to the beaches along North Shore Road. Turn left to the partially restored ruins of **Estate Cathrineberg** (also known as Hammer Farms).

Estate Cathrineberg was one of the first thriving sugar plantations on St. John. Ruins of the rectangular-shaped factory lie near the intersection of Route 10 and John's Head Road. Evidence of a rum distillery are a short distance away. Across the road, you'll find a restored windmill that is in excellent condition and has intriguing tunnels. Nearby, there are ruins of a warehouse with lovely stone archways.

Return to Centerline Road and continue to **Coral Bay**, a sleepy little village favored by the yachting crowd. Coral Bay was the first spot on St. John to be settled by the Danes in the 17th century, and several ruins in the area are left over from pre-emancipation days.

The yellow building with the red roof sitting on a hill is the **Emmaus Moravian Church**. You probably won't be able to get inside, but local legend says the site is haunted by a spirit that appears as a ram on nights with a full moon. The story stems from accounts that John Reimert Sodtmann and his stepdaughter were murdered on this spot during the first day of the slave rebellion in 1733. The ruins of **Fort Berg**, which the slaves captured after murdering Sodtmann, are on Fortsberg Hill, which juts out into Coral Bay above Harbor Point.

After Coral Bay, Route 10 continues as **East End Road** and becomes dramatic with steep climbs and sharp turns. The views are spectacular, but the road is rough and leads to the sparsely populated arid tip of the island. Unless you have several days on the island, your time will be better spent turning back west and following Route 10 to Route 20 and **The Annaberg Ruins**.

The Annaberg Plantation is the best-preserved estate on St. John, and a stroll through the grounds will give you a good grasp of what it was like to live on the island as a master or a slave before emancipation. The National Park Service has outlined a 30-minute self-guided walking tour of the property and tagged each building with a descriptive plaque to make your visit more enlightening.

Annaberg was established in 1718, and run by overseers who reported to the absentee owner, Christopher William Gottschalk. Since the landholder didn't live on the island, there is no "greathouse," but you can inspect the remains of the 16-structure wattle-and-daub slaves'

quarters. The dirt-floor hovels were topped with a thatch roof made from sugar cane leaves.

WATTLE AND DAUB

Daub, a type of mortar, was made by heating a mix of coral, lime,and sand, then combining the result with molasses and mud. Wattle, used for the walls, was made by weaving branches and reeds together. Slaves smeared daub onto the wattle to stick the stuff together.

Elsewhere on the estate, you'll see a cookhouse, jail, sugar factory and windmill made of native stones, imported bricks (brought over as ballast used to stabilize slave ships) and island coral. The 40-foot windmill was built in the early 1800s to supplement the power generated by the horsemill. Both mills at Annaberg ran full speed all day and night during harvest, since juice had to be extracted from the cane within 24 hours of cutting to prevent spoilage.

DID YOU KNOW? *A wind-driven mill could crush up to 100 cart loads of sugar cane per day, while the less efficient animal-driven mill could crush only half that amount.*

Visitors to the Annaberg Plantation are charged a $4 per person admission fee. There are no official visiting hours for the ruins, but the National Park Service conducts tours and gives living-history demonstrations at various times. Contact the NPS Visitors Center in Cruz Bay for information, ☎ 776-6201.

As you walk around the plantation, you'll have excellent views of the British Virgin Islands and **Leinster Bay**. A map near the windmill identifies the distant islands, and a trail beginning at the picnic area runs along the shoreline to a beach at the eastern end of **Waterlemon Bay**. This path is part of an old Danish road that allows unobstructed views across the Sir Francis Drake Channel, and there is great snorkeling between the beach and tiny **Waterlemon Cay**.

Back on Route 20, it's a short drive west to **Maho Bay** and one of the Caribbean's most lavish eco-minded campgrounds. (See *Where to Stay*, page 142, for camping information.) From this point to Cruz Bay, Route 20 (North Shore Road) passes a series of clear-water bays bordered by long stretches of sandy, palm-shaded beach. **Cinnamon Bay** has the

longest beach as well as campsites, **Trunk Bay** features an underwater snorkel trail, and **Hawksnest Bay** has three close-in reefs that harbor abundant sea creatures. Visitors to Trunk Bay are charged a $4 per person per day user fee.

Adventures on Water

Best Beaches

St. John's coast is lined with more than 35 marvelous beaches, so it's difficult to assemble a concise group of "bests." **Trunk Bay** tops most lists, and you'll want to spend some time there, but plan to visit a few of the other beaches as well. The sweeping white sands of the northern beaches tend to be the most crowded, but the National Park Service keeps them in good condition. Many south-shore beaches are tricky to access from land, so they are more private, but lack facilities.

If you have only a day on the island, head directly to Trunk Bay. You won't be disappointed. If you have more time, try several beaches, including the more remote ones. Each offers incredible views and most provide passage to excellent underwater scenery along offshore reefs. Unlike other islands, where developers claim the best oceanfront property, most of St. John's beaches are within the national park, so you won't find fast-food joints and high-rise condos messing up the landscape.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

All beaches in the Virgin Islands are public from the water to the line of vegetation growth. However, land abutting the beach may be privately owned, and owners may restrict access to the beach through their property. Presently, there are very few restrictions, but this could change at any time. When you approach a beach by land through private property or a neighborhood, ask permission. Hotels and campgrounds usually request that guests register at their office. Individuals simply appreciate the courtesy of being asked.

Trunk Bay, just over a mile east of Hawksnest, has the best facilities on the island, and is perhaps the most gorgeous beach in the Virgin Island chain. Shaded white sand, clear turquoise-blue water, stunning views and a 200-yard labeled snorkeling trail draw crowds of tourists. Try to arrive early in the morning or just before sunset to enjoy the beach at its uncrowded best. The $4-per-person admission fee buys you access to the picnic area, snack bar, equipment-rental stand, showers and shops.

Cinnamon Bay is the longest beach on St. John. Over a half-mile of soft white sand stretches along this north-shore bay and extends into the water. Facilities include a restaurant, snack bar, restrooms, picnic tables and telephones. Lifeguards are on duty during the day, and the Beach Shop rents snorkeling equipment, lounge chairs, kayaks, bikes and windsurfing boards. You can also arrange for scuba tours or sailing trips right on the beach. Windsurfing is good here, especially in the afternoon, when the wind picks up. During the winter months, the waves are big enough for surfing and boogie boarding. Tiny Cinnamon Cay is just offshore, a hiking trail starts across the road from the parking lot, and Cinnamon Bay Campground offers overnight facilities. (See *Hiking* and *Where to Stay* for more information.)

Maho Bay, right beside Route 20 just over a mile from Cinnamon Bay, is especially popular with children because of the calm, shallow water. Sea grass provides a home for fish, rays and turtles, so snorkeling is good. Maho Bay Campground extends up the nearby forested hillside with access off a secondary road about 1½ miles east from where Route 20 curves inland from the beach. **Little Maho Bay**, at the campground, is small, but offers soft white sand and gentle waters for swimming. Day visitors can register to use the facilities here, which include a restaurant, restrooms, general store and an activities desk with watersports equipment rental.

Waterlemon Bay, off a dirt road just past the parking lot for the Annaberg Plantation, is at the eastern end of Leinster Bay. The beach is rocky, but the water is excellent for snorkeling, especially around Waterlemon Cay, just offshore. A hiking trail at the far eastern end of Waterlemon Bay Beach leads to an area where you can enter the water and snorkel out to the cay. Between the main island and cay, the water is shallow, the bottom is sandy, and you may spot turtles, rays and starfish. A reef surrounds three sides of the cay. The current can be strong at times, so be cautious, and don't try it at all if you're a weak swimmer. There are no facilities here, so bring snacks, drinks and snorkeling equipment.

South Shore Beaches

During the winter, the surf on north shore beaches can be too rough for comfortable swimming and snorkeling. When that occurs, the south shore beaches are a fine alternative. They are less crowded year-round, and many offer excellent snorkeling along the rocky shores and nearby reefs. The following, listed west to east from the town of Cruz Bay, are some of the best on the south coast.

Frank Bay is on the southern edge of Cruz Bay, and you easily can walk there from town. From the ferry dock, go south on Strand Street, past Wharfside Village, to Bay Street. Follow Bay past Gallows Point Resort to the beach at Frank Bay. You'll have fantastic views of offshore islands from the shaded rock-and-sand beach, but getting into the water can be tricky because of coral and sea urchins near the shore.

Chocolate Hole, about a mile east of town off Route 104 (South Side Road) on blacktopped Chocolate Hole East Road, is usually quiet, but you'll have to work your way around moored boats to get to a clear swimming spot. Once you're in the water, you'll find good snorkeling around the reef off the eastern end of the beach. Homeowners in the area currently allow access through the neighborhood.

Klein Bay is great for snorkeling. Get there by going east on Route 104 until the paved road turns left and heads north up Gift Hill and a dirt road forks off to the right and continues east toward Fish Bay. Take the dirt road to the right and drive about a half-mile to a cement road. Turn right onto the paved road, then right again on a little road that dead-ends at a trail leading to the water.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you see homeowners about, ask permission to take the path across private land down to the beach. Usually, no one minds.*

Klein Bay Beach is on the eastern side of the larger **Rendezvous Bay**, and on the western side of a spit of land called Dittlif Point. (Fish Bay is on the eastern side.) The beach at Klein is made up of pebbles, but you won't have much trouble walking on them as you enter the water. Once the pebbles turn to rock and coral, watch out for spiky sea urchins. The water is calm on this western side of Dittlif Point, and you often can spot turtles, rays and other interesting creatures, along with abundant fish.

Genti Bay is at the end of the popular **Reef Bay Trail**, and hikers often swim and picnic there. The National Park Service leads scheduled

group hikes, but if you want to do it on your own, pick up the trail on Route 10 (Centerline Road) about five miles east of Cruz Bay. The trail is 2.2 miles long and the one-way hike takes about two hours. Along the way you pass interesting ruins. At the end, you will be rewarded with the sandy beach at Genti Bay, which is part of the larger Reef Bay. (See page 128 for more onformation on the Reef Bay Trail.)

Salt Pond Bay lies at the end of Route 107, which branches off Route 10 at Coral Bay. A downhill trail to the beach begins at a parking area about four miles south of the 107/10 intersection.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *This end of the island is arid, so the quarter-mile trail passes through cactus scrub with no shade. Plan to go early in the day, bring plenty of water and wear sunscreen and a hat.*

When you reach the water, you'll find a secluded white sand beach, picnic tables and a chemical-toilet outhouse. The sea is usually calm here and snorkeling is excellent. The left side of the bay has large rocks and a reef. The right side is also rocky with some coral, but the area off mid-beach is covered with seagrass.

If you want to see the salt pond, follow the **Drunk Bay Trail**, which starts at the south end of the beach. Evaporated ocean water leaves crystalized salt in the pond, and you can sometimes find interesting things living in shallow pools. Consider making the two-mile trek out to **Ram's Head Point** at the far tip of the peninsula. The point itself is on top of a 200-foot sheer cliff that plunges straight into the ocean. The hike is demanding, but you'll enjoy dramatic views from this mystical spot.

Little Lameshur Bay and **Great Lameshur Bay** are difficult to access, but worth the trouble. Many adventurous hikers trek to the beach along a steep and rugged road at the western end of Route 107, past Salt Pond. Rental companies hate to hear that you attempted this road in one of their vehicles, but if you have a robust four-wheel-drive and off-road experience, go for it!

You'll come to Great Lameshur Bay first. The beach is made up of cobblestones and rocks extend into the water. Little Lameshur, to the west, is a white-sand beach with picnic tables and toilets. A narrow stretch of land called **Yawzi Point** separates the two. Both usually are deserted and you can spend an entire afternoon exploring the trails,

ruins and coves along the two bays. Remember to bring plenty of water and snacks.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

More than 5,000 acres of the Virgin Islands National Park lie underwater. Perfect, clear, calm water makes snorkeling and scuba diving excellent ways to explore these pristine regions, and **Trunk Bay's** labeled **snorkeling trail** is a good place to start. Blue and white plaques along the 200-yard trail identify the types of coral and sea life common in the Virgin Islands. You're likely to see parrotfish, angelfish, sergeant majors, blue tang and butterfly fish among the coral. Entrance fee at Trunk Bay is $4 per person for anyone over 16 years of age, and snorkel equipment is available for an additional $4 plus a $25 refundable deposit. Contact the National Park Service for information about scheduled snorkeling tours, ☎ 776-6201.

Cinnamon Bay Watersports rents snorkeling equipment on the beach at Cinnamon Bay for $4 plus a $25 refundable deposit. The best snorkeling is around the offshore island of **Cinnamon Cay**, and the best way to get out there is by kayak, which you also can rent at Watersports for $10 an hour. ☎ 776-6330.

Other spots with excellent snorkeling include:

Waterlemon Cay off the eastern end of Leinster Bay. Here you'll find starfish, yellowtail snapper and jawfish. Currents can be strong, so only strong swimmers should attempt to swim from the beach to the cay. The surf may be too rough for snorkeling during winter.

Salt Pond Bay, on the far southern tip of the island, has coral reefs on each end of the bay which attract abundant fish and sea creatures. You may spot an octopus, turtle, or eel among the rocks.

Chocolate Hole, on the southwestern coast, has interesting rocks jutting from the water just offshore. A shallow reef on the west side of the rocks attracts parotfish, rays, squirrelfish, and turtles. Even novice snorkelers can navigate this area since the water is usually calm on the south side of the island.

Rent snorkeling equipment in Cruz Bay from **Cruz Bay Watersports** (☎ 800-835-7730 or 776-6234) for $7 per day with a $35 refundable deposit. Most dive operators will allow snorkelers to go along on scuba trips and **Cruz Bay Watersports** runs a daily snorkeling trip from the Westin Resort dock each afternoon. The cost, including equipment, is $38. Make reservations in advance.

Certified divers will want to explore some of the 30 sites within a 20-minute boat ride of St. John. Many of the sites are off the northwestern coast, and favorites include the tunnels at **Thatch Cay**, the rocky ledges at **Congo Cay** and the submerged areas of **Carvel Rock**. Visibility usually is excellent, and the craggy islets and colorful coral mounds draw crowds of large fish, rays and eels. **Eagle Shoals**, a large reef plateau with a hollow center off Coral Bay on the southeastern coast, is more remote and less visited. Experienced divers will want to explore the caves and swim-through tunnels here.

Dive Operators

The following dive shops offer first-class PADI instruction, multi-level certification, guided dive trips and equipment rental. Most operators schedule two boat trips daily and arrange instruction courses to meet visitors' vacation plans.

Expect to pay $45-$55 for a one-tank dive, $70-$75 for a two-tank dive, about $60 for an introductory resort-course dive and $385 for an open water certification course. Snorkelers can often go along for $20 on half-day trips and $30 on full-day trips. Divers with their own equipment can expect a 10% discount.

NOTE: *The area code for all the US Virgin Islands is 340.*

St. John Watersports, located at Mongoose Junction in Cruz Bay, offers offshore reef and wreck dives. ☎ 693-9841; fax 776-7406.

Coral Bay Watersports, off Route 107 on the eastern end of the island, offers watersports of all sorts, including diving and snorkeling. The sport shop rents equipment and sells videos, books and gifts. They dive every day and specialize in the more remote sites near Coral Bay. ☎ 800-420-3232 or 776-6850.

Cruz Bay Watersports, with locations in town, at Palm Plaza Shopping Center, and at the Westin Resort, has three custom dive boats and features wreck, reef, drift and night dives. Introductory and refresher classes are held daily at the Westin Resort pool. ☎ 800-835-7730 or 776-6234: fax 693-8720; www.cbw-stjohn.com; e-mail cruzbaywatersports@att.net.

Low Key Watersports, on the water at Wharfside Village in Cruz Bay, leads dive tours and snorkeling expeditions. Owners Bob and Ann Marie also run a retail shop with resort clothing and sports equipment. Other services include tank fills, day sails to the nearby British Virgin

Islands, kayak tours and parasailing. ☎ 800-835-7718 or 693-8999; fax 776-7042; www.divelowkey.com; e-mail lowkey@viaccess.net.

Paradise Watersports, run by Bob Carney on the beach at Caneel Bay, limits their dive boats to 50% capacity so that each diver receives adequate attention and ample maneuvering space. Their range of services include introductory dives, training and guided trips. ☎ 779-4999; fax 693-8690.

East End Divers schedules dive and snorkel excursions and specializes in wreck of the *Rhone* and Eagle Shoals dives. They also arrange customized boat trips and excursions to the British Virgin Islands. ☎ 693-5826 or 779-4994; www.usvi.net/eastend.

Underwater Tours

To observe St. John's underwater world without getting wet, take a 1½-hour tour aboard the air-conditioned **Coral Explorer**. You'll leave from the National Park Dock at Cruz Bay and have your own window five feet below the surface of the ocean in this watertight moving observatory. Call ahead for schedules, rates and reservations, ☎ 775-1555.

Snuba

Snuba is an alternative to snorkeling and diving, and a combination of both. Using a special dive system that floats so you don't have to wear a tank, you can dive up to 20 feet. No experience is necessary and anyone over the age of eight can do it. The $49 price includes a guided underwater tour and all equipment. Give it a try at Trunk Bay with **Snuba of St. John**. ☎ 693-8063.

Boating & Sailing

The Virgin Islands are a legendary cruising area and all visitors to St. John should plan to spend some time on the water. Whether you take a day sail to neighboring islands, a sunset cruise along the coast, or charter a yacht by the week, you'll enjoy crystal blue water, warm temperatures, soft trade winds and breathtaking scenery.

Day sails including lunch and drinks range from $70 to $85; half-day excursions with snorkeling stops are priced between $40 and $50. Powerboats get you to neighboring islands quickly, and you can rent them with or without a captain for $190 to $325 per day.

Scheduled Cruises

Christmas Winds is a luxurious 40-foot Privilege catamaran yacht captained by Peter and Helen Hoyt, who will customize your trip to suit your needs. ☎ 693-7382 (phone and fax); e-mail christmaswinds@att.net.

Gypsy Sprit II, a 35-foot DuFour yacht captained by Doug and first mate Teka, specializes in weddings and vow renewals, but also offers day sails, champagne sunset cruises and longer charters. ☎ 771-1364.

New Beginnings is a roomy catamaran captained by Paul Richardson. You can sun in the forward area or relax in the cockpit shade while Captain Paul sails to your choice of destinations. Snorkeling equipment, food and drinks are included. ☎ 771-1994 or 776-6922.

Wayward Sailor is owned by Philip Chalker, a master licensed captain with more than 25 years of Caribbean sailing experience. He runs full-day trips with two snorkel stops and lunch, half-day trips with one snorkel stop and snacks, and a champagne-and-hors d'oeuvres sunset trip. Since Captain Philip is a minister, he is authorized to officiate at on-board marriage ceremonies. ☎ 776-6922; www.bookitvi.com/wayward.htm; e-mail wayward@bookitvi.com.

Breath was built as a small tall ship by her owner and captain Peter Muilenburg and has been featured in several magazines. Peter and his wife, Dorothy, have snorkeled every reef and visited every cove of every Virgin Island since they arrived in 1968. They enjoy showing *their* islands to up to 12 guests in scheduled and customized sailing trips. Contact them on the boat, ☎ 771-2036, or through **Connections** at Coral Bay ☎ 779-4994; fax 776-6136.

Adventurer, a 50-foot catamaran, has a large deck and sunning nets for relaxing during the full-day sail to Jost Van Dyke, the half-day snorkeling sail or the champagne sunset sail. It leaves from the Westin Resort ☎ 693-8000, extension 1832, or 693-7328.

The Blast is a 45-foot motor-cruiser designed for fast, smooth ocean travel. It leaves the Westin each morning at 8:30, picks up additional passengers on the dock at Cruz Bay at 9:30, then blasts to Great Harbor on Jost Van Dyke in 35 minutes. Later in the day, the boat makes a snorkeling stop at Sandy Cay and a Soggy-Dollar-Bar stop at White Bay. Make reservations through Cruz Bay Watersports, ☎ 776-6234 or 779-4351.

Water Taxi III travels at over 30 knots per hour on its daily trip to Jost Van Dyke and Norman Island. Book a reservation through Coral Bay Watersports, ☎ 776-6850.

Charter Boats

Other boating trips and charters can be arranged through **Connections** near Chase Manhattan Bank, a block from the ferry dock, in Cruz Bay, ☎ 776-6922, or through **Hurricane Alley** at Mongoose Junction in Cruz Bay, ☎ 776-6256. Captain Robert Conn runs a motoryacht from Cinnamon Bay to the British Virgin Islands. He also welcomes wedding parties and private charters. Contact him at **Cinnamon Bay Charters**, ☎ 776-6462.

Powerboats can be booked through **Ocean Runner** on the waterfront at Wharfside Village in Cruz Bay, ☎ 693-8809, or **Antilles Powerboat** at Estate Carolina in Coral Bay, ☎ 776-6850 or 690-2607. For something more modest, stop by **Noah's Little Arks** at Wharfside Village. They rent and sell fully-equipped dinghies for island-hopping, ☎ 693-9030.

PASSPORT ALERT - US CITIZENS

If you plan to visit the British Virgin Islands, be sure to bring a passport or other proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or voter's registration card plus some form of picture identification.

Fishing

Charter boats leave St. John for the same sportfishing spots frequented by St. Thomas fishermen. Boats from **American Yacht Harbor** (☎ 775-6454) and **Charterboat Center** (☎ 775-7990) in Red Hook will stop at Cruz Bay to pick up passengers before heading for the north drop or close-in reefs.

Fishing Operators

The following companies book excursions out of St. John:

Adventures in Paradise, next to the post office in Cruz Bay, arranges all types of watersports adventures, including fishing. ☎ 779-4527.

St. John Adventures, at Gallows Point in Cruz Bay, will book a variety of excursions, including sport fishing. ☎ 800-323-7229 or 693-7730.

Paradise Watersports, at Caneel Bay, schedules sport fishing trips with Captain Bob Carney, an expert on local watersports. ☎ 779-4999; fax 693-8690.

St. John World Class Anglers, in Cruz Bay, sets up fishing trips with Captain Loren Nickbarg. ☎ 779-4281.

Gone Ketchin', a 25-foot cruiser captained by Wally Leopold, is available for fishing charters. ☎ 693-8657.

Parasailing, Windsurfing & Kayaking

Cinnamon Bay Watersports, on the beach at Cinnamon Bay, offers a complete line of equipment for windsurfing, kayaking and sailing. ☎ 776-6458.

Arawak Expeditions, based at Chocolate Hole, rents kayaks and runs guided full-day, half-day and multi-day kayaking trips. Contact them on St. John at ☎ 693-8312; www.arawak-exp.com. You may also book them through American Wilderness Experience Inc., ☎ 800-444-0099; www.awetrips.com.

Caribbean Parasail & Watersports will pick you up at your hotel for parasailing and other water adventures. They rent waverunners, sailboats, water trampolines and battery-powered floating chairs. In addition, they will arrange hiking, kayaking and snorkeling tours. Call any day between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm, ☎ 775-9360.

Low Key Watersports, at Wharfside Village in Cruz Bay, schedules parasailing and sea kayaking excursions. ☎ 800-835-7718 or 693-8999; fax 776-7042; www.divelowkey.com; e-mail lowkey@viaccess.net.

Coral Bay Watersports, on Route 107 in Coral Bay, rents kayaks, windsurfers and surfboards. ☎ 776-6850.

Maho Bay Campground rents windsurfers and Sunfish on Maho Bay ☎ 800-392-9004 or 776-6240; fax 776-6504.

Adventures on Foot

Hiking

Hiking trails in St. John's national park are as fantastic as the beaches and underwater treasures. Pick up a map and trail-guide brochure at the Virgin Islands National Park Headquarters on North Shore Road a block north of the ferry dock in Cruz Bay. Park rangers conduct guided hikes and tours of some of the most popular trails and historical sites. Headquarters are open every day except Christmas from 8 am to 4:30 pm, and all trails are open daily during daylight hours. ☎ 776-6201.

Thunder Hawk Trail Guides, under the leadership of South Carolina native Scott McDowell, conducts hikes for day-trip groups out of St. Thomas. They specialize in routes not handled by National Park guides and enhance the hiking experience with information on the history and botany of St. John. McDowell spent four years learning every aspect of the island's terrain before he was granted a permit by the Park Service to lead hiking tours. Rates vary, but average $20 per hike for adults. Contact him through Aquamarine Tours on St. Thomas, ☎ 774-1112.

Consider taking a guided hike to learn about the plants and topography of the island before you set out on your own. This knowledge will add to the enjoyment of your explorations. Then, choose one of the 22 hikes outlined in the official trail-guide brochure from the park department to hike independently. All trails in the national park are marked and well maintained, but you should always take a buddy on self-guided hikes.

The following are *Adventure Guide* favorites:

The **Lind Point Trail** (1.1 miles, 1 hour, one way) is popular because it starts near the National Park Headquarters in Cruz Bay and is relatively easy to traverse, ending at beautiful Honeymoon Beach on Caneel Bay.

Heading north out of Cruz Bay, the trail passes through cactus scrub for about 0.2 miles, then forks, with the path straight on leading to the Solomon Bay spur (see *Best Beaches*), and the main trail to the right ascending to the north. Take the uphill route to the right another 0.2 miles to the **Lind Point Battery Overlook** (160-foot elevation). English cannons once stood on the point to defend the harbor from possible takeover by French troops, and now you can sit and observe modern-

day activity in the town and bay. As you walk around the point and gaze in all directions, you will see offshore cays and islands and the northern coast of St. John.

Leave the overlook and hike east through dry forest and past intriguing rock formations. Continue past two spur trails (the first goes to the Virgin Islands Biosphere Reserve and the second to Solomon Bay) to a third spur that leads uphill to the Caneel Hill Trail across North Shore Road. From here the Lind Point Trail continues downhill to Honeymoon Beach.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Always tell someone where you plan to hike and when you plan to return. The activities director or receptionist at your hotel can keep track of this information if you don't know anyone else on the island.*

The **Cinnamon Bay Self-Guiding Trail** (0.5 miles, 1 hour, round trip) is an easy loop hike past the ruins of a 19th-century sugar plantation. Pick up the trail across North Shore Road from the entrance to Cinnamon Bay campground. Signs identifying sections of the historic plantation and surrounding vegetation mark the shaded trail that passes by the grave sites of Danish settlers. Walls from the sugar factory sit at the beginning of the trail, and a distillery to the southwest was used to produce bay rum oil after the sugar market collapsed. From the distillery, the trail passes through a tropical forest where bay rum trees grow. The cemetery is down a short spur trail. As you hike back toward the road, you will pass some of the oldest and largest fruit trees on the island. The estate house, west of the factory, was built early in the 20th century out of galvanized steel to replace the original home that was destroyed by a hurricane.

Don't confuse the self-guiding loop trail with the **Cinnamon Bay Trail** (1.1 miles, 1 hour, one way), which is longer and more difficult. The marker for this trail is east of the ruins of Cinnamon Bay plantation's storage house. The trail follows an old Danish road and ascends about 700 feet, with the steepest part at the beginning. Most of the hike is through forest and takes you to an overlook with a fantastic view.

The **Francis Bay Trail** (0.3 miles, 15 minutes, one way) is easy to hike. Pick up the trail at the Park Service storage building near the intersection of Leinster Bay Road and the road that leads to Maho Bay Campground. You will pass the ruins of the Francis Bay Estate, which are in shaky condition and shouldn't be explored. Vegetation along the

path is dry scrub that has not recuperated from years of cattle grazing, and you'll wonder why you're bothering with this trail... until you come to ponds that harbor an abundance of birds, including herons, kingfishers, sandpipers and egrets. Past the ponds, you can head downhill toward the beach at Francis Bay or take the trail to the left to benches and a boardwalk along the salt pond.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Always carry plenty of water when hiking on St. John. Clean drinking water is not available within the park, and hiking in the heat causes quick dehydration.*

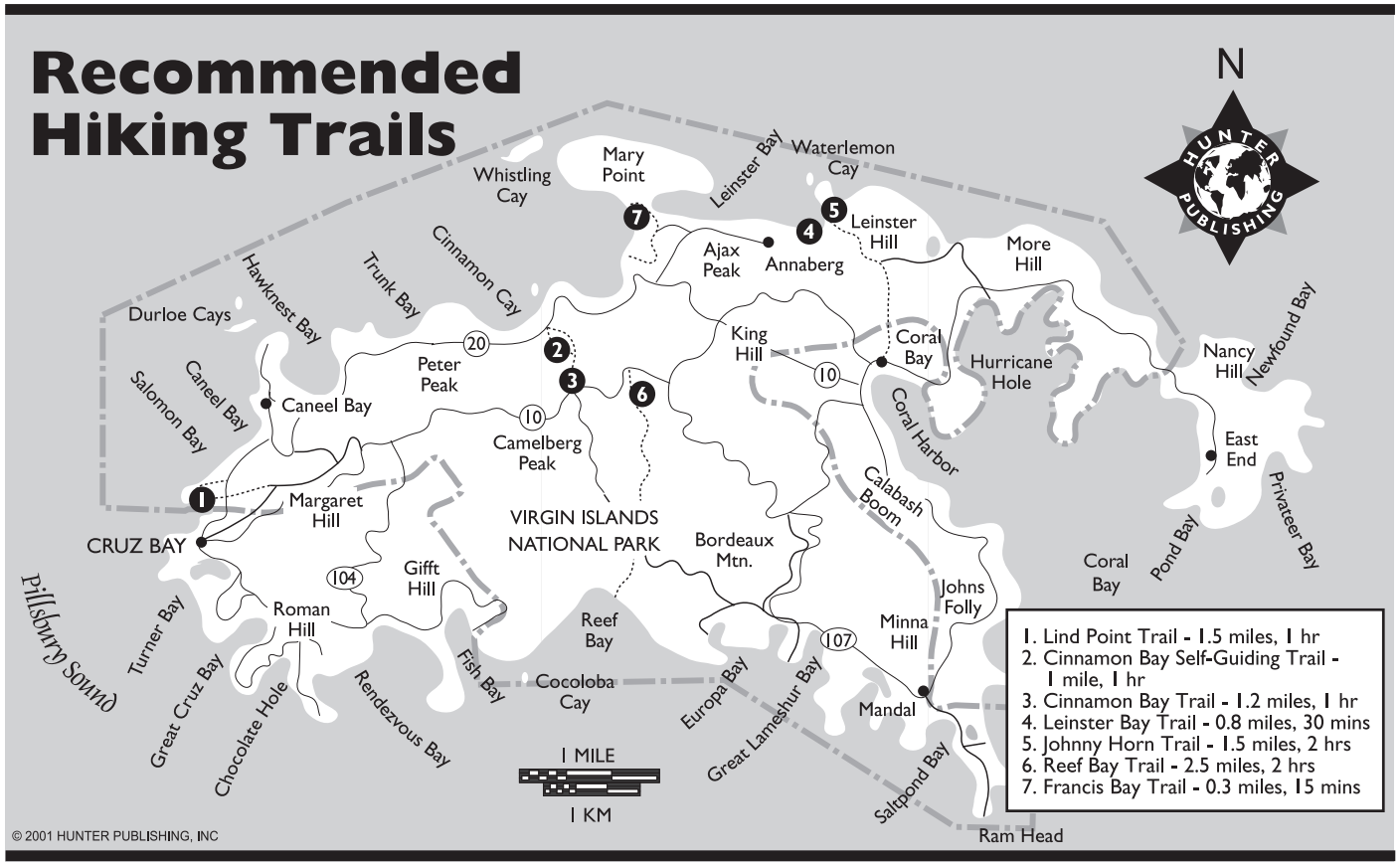
The **Leinster Bay Trail** (0.8 miles, 30 minutes, one way) offers gorgeous views of Leinster Bay and the Sir Frances Drake Channel, which divides the USVI from the BVI. The trail begins near the picnic area at the Annaberg Plantation on the paved Leinster Bay Road. It is part of an old Danish road that runs along the water's edge, and you can cool off with a swim at the beach about halfway down the trail. Ruins of the Leinster Bay Estate are at the end of the trail.

> *Keep a little way back from the ruins and don't climb on them; they are fragile and may collapse.*

At the east end of the bay, the **Johnny Horn Trail** (1.8 miles, 2 hours, one way) connects with the Leinster Bay Trail and a spur path leads north to Waterlemon Bay. Tiny Waterlemon Cay lies just offshore. Excellent snorkeling exists between the main island and the cay. (See *Scuba Diving & Snorkeling*, page120.)

The **Reef Bay Trail** (2.2 miles, 2 hours, one way) is considered one of the best hikes in the Caribbean, and the National Park Service (☎ 776-6201 for reservations) offers guided outings that include return by boat from the beach at the end of the trail. While the trail is downhill, rangers warn that the hike can be difficult due to its length and rocky terrain. If you go on your own, remember that the return hike will be uphill and quite strenuous.

The trail begins at stone steps across from the parking area 4.9 miles east of Cruz Bay on Centerline Road, and descends through subtropical forest that was never cleared for sugar cane fields. After a rain, the trail in this area can be slippery. As you hike down the valley, the vegetation turns to dry forest then scrub, and you may spot wild donkeys and hogs nearby.


Recommended Hiking Trails
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Whistling Cay
Mary Point
Leinster Bay
Waterlemon Cay
Leinster Hill
Ajax Peak
Annaberg
More Hill
Cinnamon Cay
Trunk Bay
Hawknest Bay
Durloe Cays
Salomon Bay
Caneel Bay
Caneel Bay
Peter Peak
King Hill
Coral Bay
Hurricane Hole
Nancy Hill
Newfound Bay
Coral Harbor
East End
Privateer Bay
Camelberg Peak
Calabash Boom
Margaret Hill
CRUZ BAY
VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
Bordeaux Mtn.
Coral Bay
Pond Bay
Gifft Hill
Johns Folly
Roman Hill
Reef Bay
Minna Hill
Pillsbury Sound
Turner Bay
Great Cruz Bay
Chocolate Hole
Rendezvous Bay
Fish Bay
Cocoloba Cay
Europa Bay
Great Lameshur Bay
Mandal
Saltpond Bay
Ram Head
1 MILE
1 KM
1. Lind Point Trail - 1.5 miles, 1 hr
2. Cinnamon Bay Self-Guiding Trail - 1 mile, 1 hr
3. Cinnamon Bay Trail - 1.2 miles, 1 hr
4. Leinster Bay Trail - 0.8 miles, 30 mins
5. Johnny Horn Trail - 1.5 miles, 2 hrs
6. Reef Bay Trail - 2.5 miles, 2 hrs
7. Francis Bay Trail - 0.3 miles, 15 mins
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

St. John

About a half-hour into the hike, you'll come to the ruins of the 18th-century Jossie Gut Sugar Estate. (The word *gut* describes low spots where rainwater collects and flows towards the ocean. The bottom of a *gut* generally is washed down to bare rock, while the sides nourish abundant vegetation.) Farther down the trail, you'll pass the ruins of a house that was part of Estate Par Force. A few minutes later, you will come to the turn off to the **Lameshur Bay Trail** (1.5 miles, 1½ hours, round trip) on the left. This trail leads to a path to the Reef Bay Greathouse and connnects to the beach at Lameshur Bay.

Continue until you come to the marked **Petroglyph Trail** (0.2 miles, 15 minutes, round trip) on the right. The trail is flat and ends at a waterfall and freshwater pool. The pictures and symbols carved into the rocks around the pool have not been scientifically dated and many theories surround their origin. Most people think the carvings were made by pre-Columbian Indians, probably the Tainos, and there are some similarities with aboriginal markings found on other islands. Another explanation is that the carvings were made by runaway slaves who hid out in the area.

Back on the Reef Bay Trail, you will go along level ground to the partially restored Reef Bay sugar factory. See the horsemill that used animal power to crush sugar cane, and the boiling room where crushed cane was dried before it was burned. The boiling bench and copper boiling pots were once used to cook the cane juice into sugar. Behind the horsemill you will find above-ground graves of the former owner of the estate and his two daughters.

Just beyond the ruins is your reward – the beach at **Genti Bay**. See *Best Beaches*, page 118.

Tennis

Tennis players may use the public courts near the fire station in Cruz Bay on a first-come, first-serve basis. The courts are lighted until 10 pm. Guests at the Westin Resort have complimentary use of six lighted courts. Others may reserve a court by paying a $15-per-hour fee. Call for reservations, ☎ 693-8000.

Adventures on Horseback

You'll experience a whole different type of sightseeing when you travel on the back of a donkey or horse. **The Carolina Corral** in Coral Bay offers a wide choice of adventures that take riders along the coast and into the mountains. The most popular half-day outing allows riders to choose between a trip to the beach where they can snorkel and go into the surf on horseback, or a trip to Bordeaux Mountain, where they take in stunning views of St. John and neighboring islands. Lunch and drinks are included for $90 per person. Sunset, full-moon and hourly rides also are available. Call owners Jeff and Dana for details and prices, ☎ 693-5778; www.st-john.com/trailrides.

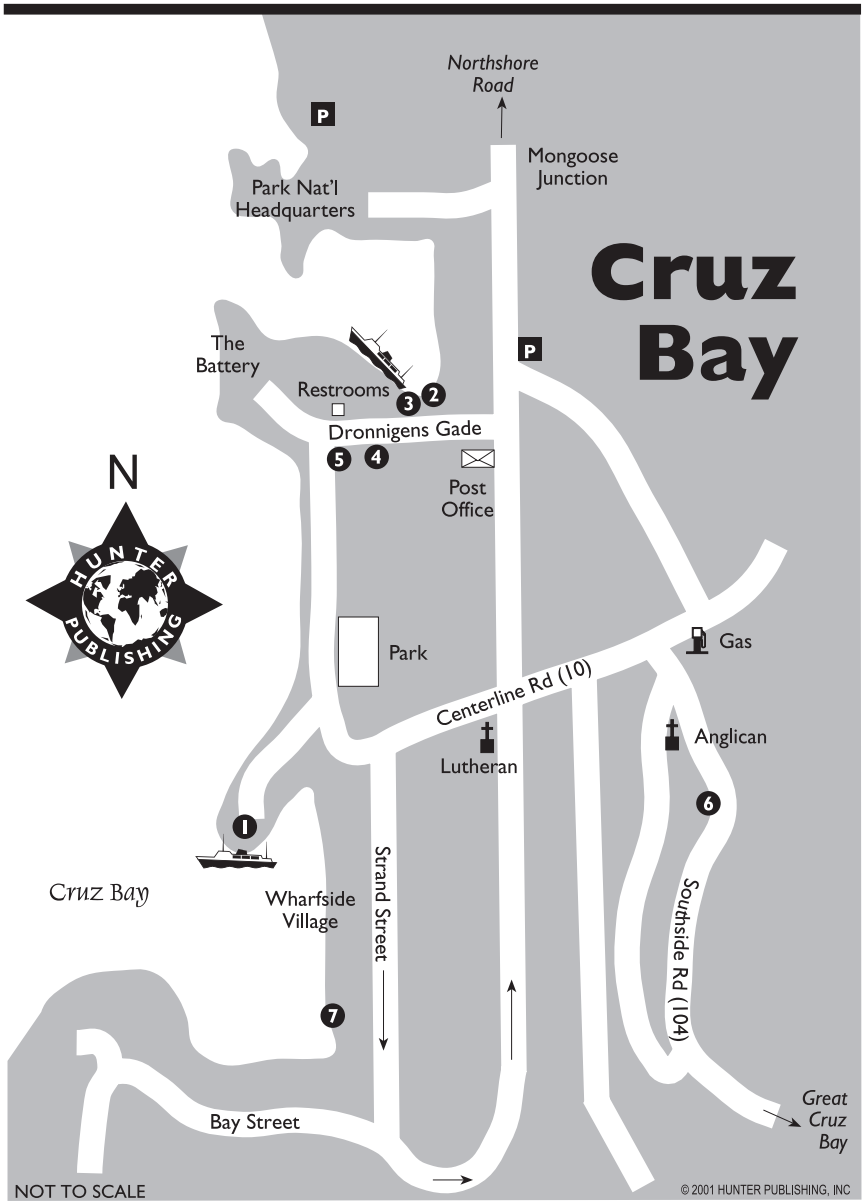
Shopping

Many visitors enjoy shopping on St. John more than on St. Thomas because, although the choices aren't as extensive, the pace is more relaxed and the majority of shops offer unique goods. The island's charm and serenity draw artists and craftsmen who take great pride in the quality of their work. Many have their own stores and others sell exclusively through local retailers. Shoppers who take the time to browse through a variety of shops will be rewarded with some excellent discoveries.

Cruz Bay

The town has three shopping areas. **Wharfside Village** is to the right (south) as you step off the ferry dock. **Mongoose Junction** is a couple of blocks to the left (north) and about five minutes on foot from the dock. Between these two complexes, souvenir shops and upscale boutiques are scattered along the streets in the middle of town. **Palm Plaza** is a small complex of shops south of town on Route 104. At the eastern end of the island, you'll find a few stores in the village of Coral Bay and a few more to the south on Route 107 at **Shipwreck Landing**.

St. John Saturday, an all-day festival that happens on the last Saturday of every month, is the best time to find locally made crafts, food items and clothes. The event takes place in the center of Cruz Bay in and around the park opposite the ferry dock. Local musicians play island sounds, vendors set out displays of handmade goodies and the



1. Red Hook/Charlotte Amalie ferry
2. Virgin Gorda/Tortola ferry
3. US Customs & Immigrations
4. Tourist Information
5. De Castro Clinic
6. Sprauve Library & Museum of Cultural Arts

zesty aroma of West Indian spices fills the air. All the permanent shops are open as well, so shoppers have an extensive variety of things to buy and take home.

OPENING HOURS

Most stores are open Monday through Saturday from 9 am until 5 pm. However, shops often stay open later when cruise-ship passengers are on the island and during high season. On the other hand, some stores close on a whim, and others lock their doors for several weeks so the staff can take an annual vacation. Call ahead, especially during low season, to confirm the hours of operation before you make a special trip to a specific store.

Mongoose Junction

Mongoose Junction is a lively modern complex designed in Caribbean style and constructed of stone and wood. It covers most of the block across from the National Park Headquarters on Route 20 (North Shore Road), and includes restaurants and bars that often feature live entertainment. Some of the most interesting stores are described below.

Baho el Sol Gallery exhibits original art, photography, crafts and prints by well-known Caribbean artists such as Les Anderson, Kat Sowa, Aimee Trayser, Gail Van de Bogurt, Constance Wallace and Suki Buchalter. ☎ 693-7070; fax 693-7765.

Bamboula is a multi-national collection of primitive art, native musical instruments, jewelry, baskets and crafts laid out in plantation-style armoires and cabinets that also are for sale. The owner, Jo Sterling, brings items from other islands and many parts of the world to the boutique. The store features a line of private-label clothing for men, women and children. Open until 9:30 every night except Sunday, this shop is an excellent place for after-dinner shopping. ☎ 693-8699.

Best of Both Worlds features imaginative paintings, whimsical sculptures and exquisite jewelry designed primarily by Caribbean artists. You'll be tempted by the fanciful works of art, the *zen-fully* peaceful waterfalls and one-of-a-kind gifts. The shop will arrange for shipping if you fall for something to large to tote home. ☎ 693-7005.

Big Planet Adventure Outfitters has clothes, footwear and equipment for all types of outdoor quests. The entire family can stock up on merchandise made by Teva, Patagonia, Timberland, Birkenstock, Revo and Jams World. Ask to see some of the things made from recycled materials. ☎ 776-6638.

Clothing Studio is part boutique and part workshop. The store has been selling hand-painted clothing on St. John since 1978, and you can watch the artists at work on their original designs. Pick up an original hat, swim suit, sundress or T-shirt. In addition, you can select clothing made by well-known manufacturers such as Anne Cole, and the store will order colors and sizes that aren't in stock. If you want something really special, call or visit the store and speak directly to one of the artists about creating an original design just for you. ☎ 776-6585; fax 693-8091.

R & I Patton opened on St. John in 1973 and moved into their store at Mongoose Junction in 1978. The "R" stands for Rudy; the "I" is for Irene. Together they head up a talented team of jewelry makers who create a truly unique selection of gold and silver treasures. Rudy is known for handmade chains, designs featuring unusual petroglyphs and jewelry using ancient Danish, Spanish and US coins. One of his designs features the petroglyph symbol attributed to pre-Columbian natives and used by Caneel Bay Resort as a trademark. These pieces make a terrific souvenir. Irene specializes in work that incorporates gemstones and exquisite pearls from around the world. Some of the shop's most unusual pieces are made from molds of actual shells and sea creatures using silver or gold and precious gemstones. Jewelry lovers will want to spend hours in this shop. If you don't get your fill while on the island, check out the website or request a catalog. ☎ 800-626-3445 or 776-6548; fax 779-4816; www.pattongold.com; e-mail: TalkToUs@pattongold.com.

Wharfside Village

Right on the water, just to the right (south) of the dock as you exit the ferry from St. Thomas, you will find Wharfside Village. It's an attractive, multi-level complex of restaurants, bars and shops, and a great place to pass the time while you wait to board the ferry. Some of the most interesting shops are described below.

Pusser's Tropical and Nautical Company Store is part of the family of stores, bars and restaurants that are famous in the British Virgin Islands, where they originated. The shop is on the upper level and carries the company's signature line of nautical-theme gifts, accessories

and apparel for men, women and children. Pick up a bottle of Pusser's famous rum, which is legendary with British naval personnel who are said to use it as a daily tonic aboard ship. Stop by **Pusser's Beach Bar** for their popular drink known as a Painkiller, or sample an order of fish and chips at **Pusser's Restaurant**. Call the store and bar at ☎ 693-9080 and the restaurant at ☎ 693-8489.

Freebird Creations features eclectic modern-design jewelry, wearable art, tribal masks, pirate-inspired ear swords, ethnic beads, New Age publications, incense and waterproof watches. There are also more than a hundred types of gemstones. If you're looking for something different and fun, try this free-spirited shop. ☎ 693-8625.

Isola is a shop to peruse slowly so that you don't miss anything. Outstanding offerings include hand-painted clothing by Sloop Jones, tropical hardwood furniture, island-style jewelry, wind chimes, tropic-colored fabrics, aromatic candles and unusual household accessories. ☎ 779-4212.

Blue Carib Gems and Rocks Factory is owned and operated by the O'Hara family. They employ a super-friendly staff and talented craftspeople. The highlight here is gold and silver custom-designed jewelry featuring Caribbean gemstones, including larimar. You'll also find a collection of historic Greek and Roman coins, along with treasures from old Spanish galleons. If you don't see exactly what you want in stock, they'll make it for you. ☎ 693-8299.

Elsewhere in Cruz Bay

Pink Papaya is in the Lemon Tree Mall behind Chase Manhattan Bank. Owner and artist Lisa Etre stocks the store with original gifts, home accessories, paintings, sculpture and jewelry. Bright island colors jump out at you in this shop. You'll want to stock up on dinnerware, tablecloths, trays and stained-glass objects. ☎ 693-8535.

Deborah Designs, also at Lemon Tree Mall, displays original hand-painted clothing and accessories by St. John artist Deborah Willard. Long-time fans cherish her colorful fashions and whimsical designs. The shop is open 10 am until 9 pm Monday through Saturday, and Deborah sometimes opens on Sunday if customers call ahead to let her know they're coming. ☎ 693-7533.

Coconut Coast Studios is an art gallery and gift shop housed in a West Indian cottage on the waterfront at Frank Bay, a five-minute walk south of the ferry dock, just past Gallows Point Resort on Bay Street. The studio features the work of well-known Caribbean artist

Elaine Estern. Her original watercolors and limited edition prints bring to life both above- and below-water scenes of the colorful Caribbean. Estern's art is displayed at the Government House in St. Thomas, Gallows Point Resort, Peter Island Resort, Westin Resort and stores throughout the Caribbean, including Little Switzerland. Check the website for examples of her work, and call ahead if you're interested in meeting the artist at her studio. ☎ 800-887-3798 or 776-6944; www.coconutcoats.com; e-mail info@coconutcoast.com.

Pine Peace Liquors, on South Shore Road between town and the Westin Resort, has a large selection of liquor and beer as well as a well-stocked climate-controlled wine cellar. Carry-on boxes are available for toting home your limit of duty-free liquor. ☎ 779-4697.

Sparky's, behind the park pavilion across from the ferry dock, has great prices on souvenir T-shirts and stocks current newspapers and magazines from the states. This is also the place to pick up film, sunglasses, snacks and duty-free liquor. ☎ 776-6284.

Starfish Market, a full-service grocery and deli, is on the east end of town across from the Texaco station. Stock up on rotisserie chicken, sandwiches, drinks, fresh meats and seafood, plus all the supplies you need for your condo or live-aboard boat. The market is open 7:30 am until 8:30 pm daily. ☎ 779-4949.

Island Made, at Palm Plaza on Route 104 just southeast of town, features fine arts and crafts made by local artists and artisans. Pottery, hand-painted clothes, designer mirrors and sculpture are among the displays. ☎ 693-7575.

Coral Bay Area

Grasshopper Gallery, on Route 107 in the Skinny Legs complex, features watercolors, pastels and monotypes by local artist Carolyn Caldwell. Standard business hours are noon to 5 pm daily, but you can call for an appointment at other times, ☎ 776-6032.

Syzygy Gallery, also at the Skinny Legs complex on Route 107, exhibits the one-of-a-kind glass mosaics by Lisa Crumrine. These intricate designs radiate the colors and light of the island. In addition, you'll find watercolors by Vicki Rogers, paintings by Lori Donerty and monoprints by Alyson Benford. Photography, furniture and handcrafted jewelry by other St. John artists round out the selection. The shop is open daily from 11:30 am until 6 pm. ☎ 693-5444.

■ Where to Stay

Although most of St. John is sheltered by the national park and undeveloped, the island has a diverse list of places to stay. Visitors may choose from high-priced resorts, economical villas or guesthouses, and budget-range campgrounds. Unlike most islands in the Caribbean, St. John's beaches are not lined with highrise hotels and many fine accommodations are not on the water. However, you're never far from the ocean, no matter where you stay, and if you want to be directly on the beach, you'll find both expensive resorts and economical campgrounds situated on stunning stretches of white sand.

Rental Agencies

To rent a cottage, villa or private home, contact one of the companies listed below. Some will arrange your entire vacation, including car rental, island tours and scuba/snorkeling/fishing excursions.

NOTE: *The area code for St. John is 340.*

- **Catered to Vacation Property Management**, PO Box 704, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831, ☎ 800-424-6641 or 776-6641; fax 693-8191; e-mail cateredto@islands.vi.
- **VIVA! Villas**, PO Box 1747, St. John, VI 00831, ☎ 888-856-4601 or 779-4250; fax 693-9436; http//vivavacations.com.
- **Caribbean Villas and Resorts**, PO Box 458, Islandia Building, 3rd Floor, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831, ☎ 776-6152 or 800-338-0987; fax 779-4044; www.caribbeanvilla.com; e-mail caribvilla@newtonline.com.
- **On Line Vacations Inc.**, 9901 Connections East, Coral Bay, St. John, USVI 00830, ☎ 888-842-6632 or 776-6036; fax 693-5357; www.onlinevacations.com; e-mail onlinevacations@compuserve.com.
- **Destination St. John**, PO Box 8306, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831, ☎ 800-562-1901 or 779-4647 (phone/fax); www.destinationstjohn.com.
- **Book-It V.I.**, PO Box 1552, St. John, VI 00831, ☎ 693-8555; fax 693-8480; www.bookitvi.com.

Prices

The following listings are recommended as the best of their class based on location, price and facilities. Rates reflect the cost of a standard dou-

ble room for two people in high season. During low season, generally from April 15 through December 14, rates drop 25-50%. Expect to pay an additional 8% tax year-round.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART	
The following price scale should be used as a guideline. All prices are given in US dollars.	
$	$75 or less
$$	$76-125
$$$	$126-200
$$$$	More than $200

Resorts

Caneel Bay, PO Box 720, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831. ☎ 800-928-8889 or 776-6111; fax 693-8280; www.caneelbay.com; e-mail caneelbay@worldnet.att.net. 166 rooms and suites. $$$$.

The resort has changed a bit since Rosewood Hotels of Dallas took over as property managers a few years ago, but Caneel Bay still sets the standard for laid-back, understated, totally indulgent opulence. Since its beginning almost 50 years ago, the 170-acre resort has repeatedly been recognized for its compatibility with nature, and Rosewood appears dedicated to preserving that reputation.

Air conditioning has been added. Dabs of color have popped up in the traditionally tasteful taupe decor. But, change has come slowly and discreetly, so as not to startle or offend long-time devotees who return year after year and stay weeks at a time. Seclusion, privacy and tranquility are still the resort's best features.

When you check into Caneel Bay Resort, you have exclusive access to seven postcard-perfect beaches and a vast expanse of beautifully landscaped lawn criss-crossed by paths lined with almost 2,000 varieties of plants. The Beach Hut offers all types of watersports equipment and arranges for snorkeling, scuba and fishing excursions. A freshwater swimming pool, 11 all-weather tennis courts, an activities pavilion, a fully-equipped fitness center and three restaurants are tucked here and there among the fragrant gardens.

All rooms offer views of either the tropical gardens or the ocean, and premium rooms feature balconies that open directly onto one of the

white-sand beaches. If you want to really splurge, check into Cottage 7, which was Laurance Rockefeller's private estate house. It now houses a secluded collection of mini-suites with dramatic ocean views. Casual upscale wicker furniture, handwoven fabrics and plantation ceiling fans provide luxurious comfort in all rooms, but don't expect in-room TVs or whirlpool bathtubs.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Children under eight years old are not allowed to visit Caneel Bay Resort from early-January to mid-March. However, at other times, families with children are lodged in a special section of rooms, and the kids are entertained in the Turtle Town Activities Room.*

Westin Resort, St. John, PO Box 8310, Great Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831. ☎ 800-808-5020 or 693-8000; fax 779-4500; www.westin.com. 285 rooms and suites, plus 96 Westin Vacation Club villas. $$$$.

Architecture buffs and gardeners will want to visit the Westin, even if they don't stay overnight. The sharp angles, oversized windows and steep roof lines of 13 low-rise buildings contrast pleasingly with the gentle slope of lushly landscaped grounds toward a soft, palm-lined beach bordering the calm, turquoise-blue waters of Great Cruz Bay.

The focal point of the resort is the vast freshwater swimming pool. It covers a quarter-acre and features a waterfall and two jacuzzis. Other amenities include a well-equipped fitness center and a spa offering massage therapy and facials. In addition, there are six tennis courts, a Kid's Club Activity Center, a gift shop, liquor store and hair salon.

All rooms are air conditioned and feature cable TVs, VCRs, minibars, coffee makers, direct-dial telephones with computer ports and voice mail, in-room safes and hair dryers. Out on the beach, guests enjoy snorkeling, windsurfing and boating. Cruz Bay Watersports arranges scuba training and trips.

Gallows Point Suite Resort, PO Box 58, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831. ☎ 800-348-8444 or 776-6434; fax 776-6080; www.gallowspoint.com. 60 suites. $$$$.

You'll see Gallows Point to your right as you approach St. John by ferry. The resort consists of 14 two-level buildings clustered near the beach on a landscaped peninsula that juts out into the bay. It makes an ideal location for visitors who want to be near the shops and restaurants in Cruz Bay.

Each suite includes a full kitchen and a living area with a sleeper-sofa and louvered doors that open onto a patio or balcony with views of either the ocean or harbor. Garden suites have air-conditioned bedrooms and oversized showers. Upper-level suites have a loft bedroom and an extra half-bath. All the apartments are decorated in pastel island-style fabrics and have tile floors and wicker furniture.

Amenities include a small beach with outstanding snorkeling, a small pool, a gift shop and an activities center. The bar, located on the third level, is an excellent place for sunset drinks. Ellington's Restaurant, on the second level, serves excellent meals in a romantic setting.

Harmony, PO Box 310, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00830. ☎ 800-392-9004 or 776-6240; fax 212-861-6210; www.maho.org/harmony.html. 12 units. $$$ (the price code for Harmony may seem high, but it reflects the high-season cost for a studio unit with kitchen facilities rather than the cost of a double room). Rates are given per day, but guests must stay a minimum of seven nights.

Harmony is one of four award-winning eco-resorts on St. John. It sits on a shady hill above the tent-cottages at Maho Bay Camps on the island's north shore. Each two-story building runs on solar and wind power and is built of recycled materials. Beams are composted wood scraps. Floor decking and walls were recently newspapers. Bathroom tiles are made of ground glass bottles and rugs come from old rubber tires. But, you'd never know it. The spacious contemporary units look very much like those at a typical island hotel, and are just as clean, comfortable and attractively furnished.

Smaller "Bedroom Studios" have two twin beds, a well-equipped kitchenette with a dining table, a private tiled bath and a large furnished deck. "Living Room Studios" are larger and have a queen-size sleeper-sofa in the open living area in addition to all the amenities of the smaller studios.

Guests at Harmony can use all the facilities at Maho Bay Camps, including watersports equipment, transportation, restaurant, store and cultural programs.

WHO IS STANLEY SELENGUT?

Stanley Selengut is the award-winning mastermind behind the construction of St. John's four environmentally friendly resorts – **Harmony, Estate Concordia, Maho Bay Camps** and **Concordia Eco-Tents**. Formerly a New York developer and civil engineer, he moved to St. John and set up 18 innovative tent-cottages at Maho Bay Camps in the 1970s, when the term eco-tourism didn't exist.

Before Selengut, anyone who wanted an intimate encounter with nature had to tough it out in the wilds without benefit of everyday comforts and modern conveniences. After the compound at Maho Bay became popular with both environmentalists and travelers, other developers began to consider the revolutionary concept of site-sensitive, naturally powered lodging constructed of recycled materials. Selengut went on to build Maho's three sister resorts on St. John, and he now works with the National Park Service to promote and design additional "green" resorts. His work sets the standard for environmentally-responsible developments that protect and restore nature while providing a positive experience for guests.

Estate Concordia Studios, Coral Bay, St. John, USVI 00830. ☎ 800-392-9004 or 693-5855; fax 693-5960; www.maho.org/concordia. 10 studio units. $$$ (the price code for Concordia may seem high, but it reflects the high-season cost for a studio unit with kitchen facilities rather than the cost of a double room).

These spacious studios, set on 51 oceanfront acres above Salt Pond Bay, are an excellent choice if you plan to explore this remote area of the national park on the island's southeastern coast. Each open-air unit has a breathtaking view of the ocean and Ram Head peninsula. Great hiking trails and outstanding snorkeling spots are nearby, and there is an on-site swimming pool.

You'll need a car to get around. Cruz Bay is about a 40-minute drive from the resort, and the north-shore beaches are 20 to 30 minutes away. The nearby village of Coral Bay has limited shopping, a few restaurants and a watersports center.

Three types of accommodations are available at Concordia. One is a single-level "Efficiency Studio" with a large main room that opens onto a deck. The "Vaulted Studio" is similar to the efficiency, but has a high, wood ceiling, a wrap-around deck and full kitchen. Both of these units have either a queen-size sleeper-sofa or two twin beds, and can accommodate three guests when a rollaway bed is added. The larger "Loft Duplex" has a 20-foot cathedral ceiling over the living area and large fold-away doors that open onto a wrap-around deck. Up to six people can share this roomy two-bath apartment when a rollaway is added to the standard two twin beds and queen-size sofa-bed. The fully-equipped kitchen even has a dishwasher.

All studios have tile floors, comfortable furniture and ceiling fans. Each building is elevated above lush natural vegetation and constructed around pre-existing trees. Since all guests stay a minimum of seven nights and tend to be active and gregarious, it's not unusual to find them gathered at the self-service laundry room or hillside swimming pool exchanging adventure stories.

Campgrounds

Maho Bay Camps, PO Box 310, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00830. ☎ 800-392-9004 or 693-6596; fax 776-6504; www.maho.org. 114 tent-cottages. $$.

Maho Bay was the first of the four eco-friendly complexes developed on St. John by award-winning environmentalist Stanley Selengut. It began in the 1970s with 18 tent-cottages and has grown to 114 camping accommodations. The units are 16-foot-square wooden platforms covered with canvas and screens and outfitted with two twin beds, a couch, table and chairs, cooking utensils, electric lamps and a propane stove. All tent-cottages are connected by elevated wooden walkways and many have stunning ocean views from their private decks.

Hillside amenities include a rustic dining pavilion where guests congregate for meals and programs, as well as a supply store. Bathhouses have low-flow flush toilets and pull-chain showers. An excellent watersports center on the white-sand beach offers snorkeling, diving, kayaking and windsurfing.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Make your reservations for Maho Bay Camps well in advance. This is one of the most highly acclaimed eco-tourism destinations in the world, and many campers return year after year, so the best units are booked early.*

Concordia Eco-Tents, Coral Bay, St. John, USVI 00830. ☎ 800-392-9004 or 693-5855; fax 693-5960: www.maho.org/concordia. 11 tent-cottages. $$

The high-tech lodging here exemplifies eco-tourism at its best. Each tent-cottage sits high up in the trees and has a private bath and a kitchen with running water, which makes life civilized without compromising the environment. Evidence of conservation is everywhere. All power comes from the sun and wind, shower stalls are tiny so you're not likely to linger, and the toilet is a composting type, which is an educational experience.

The compound is adjacent to Estate Concordia Studios overlooking Salt Pond Bay, and the views of the ocean are spectacular. Each unit can sleep up to six on twin beds, loft mattresses and a queen-size futon. Meal preparation is simplified by the running-water sink, propane stove and refrigerator. Large screened windows allow plenty of cool ventilation from constant trade winds.

Coral Bay shops and restaurants are about 10 minutes away by car. Guests can use the swimming pool and laundry facilities at Estate Concordia.

Cinnamon Bay Campground, PO Box 720, Cruz Bay, St. John, USVI 00831. ☎ 800-539-9998 or 776-6330; fax 776-6458; www.cinnamonbay.com. 126 bare sites, tents and cottages. $-$$.

If you plan to spend your vacation in your swimsuit, this is the place for you. Cinnamon Bay has the longest beach on St. John and as a guest at this National Park Service campground, you're never more than a two-minute walk from the water.

You can choose between three types of accommodations: bare sites, tents or cottages. Bare sites are typical clearings designed for one large or two small tents. A picnic table and charcoal grill are provided, but you must bring your own tent, bedding, towels and cooking utensils. If you opt to stay in the tents, you'll get a sturdy 10x14-foot canvas shelter with a solid floor. Each is outfitted with cots, an ice chest, water container, gas lantern, charcoal grill, picnic table and cooking/eating

utensils. Cottages are screened-in 15x15-foot concrete structures with electric lights, ceiling fans, four twin beds and an outside terrace. Linens are provided and may be exchanged for fresh ones up to twice a week. Each cottage also has a propane stove in addition to a charcoal grill and all the dining equipment offered with the tents.

Bathhouses with flush-toilets and cool-water showers are nearby, and you can store valuables in a safe or locker. Since the campground is located in the national park, rangers lead nature tours and give presentations in the amphitheater. The on-site Tree Lizards Restaurant serves island specialties, including vegetarian dishes, and there's a general store for groceries and supplies. Down on the beach, the watersports center rents surfboards, windsurfers, kayaks, sailboats and snorkeling equipment.

WEEKEND TREATS

An all-day street party is held in Cruz Bay the last Saturday of each month. Bands perform throughout the day and evening, local artisans display their crafts, cooks compete in a bake-off and most restaurants and bars stay open until the last ferry leaves for St. Thomas at 2 am. Coral Bay Sundays are similar. They take place on the second Sunday of each month. Brunch is held in Coral Bay, then everyone picks up a *Treasure Map* listing individual sales in the area. For information, call The St. John Action Committee, ☎ 776-6179.

Where to Eat

Don't plan to dress for dinner unless you've got reservations at one of the posh hotel restaurants such as Caneel Bay Resort. Otherwise, you'll be eating casually, most likely on a patio or in an open-air dining room.

Meals on St. John range from cheap, excellent island food served at roadside stands to expensive yet marvelous seafood. Be sure to try the *patés* (pronounced like the French, but not at all the same thing), which are bundles of deep-fried pastry filled with spice-laden meat or fish. These make a delicious inexpensive meal.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *One way to dine less expensively is to have your main meal at lunchtime, when prices tend to be somewhat less.*

The following are a mix of restaurants chosen for their location, ambiance or particularly delicious food. For such a small island, St. John has a lot of places to eat. Most are in the town of Cruz Bay or the village of Coral Bay. In addition, every resort has at least one fine restaurant and a snack bar.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Restaurants often change their hours during low season, and some close for several weeks during the summer, so call ahead to avoid disappointment.*

Prices

DINING PRICE CHART	
Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and tip. There's no tax on meals.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-20
$$$	$21-35
$$$$	More than $35

Cruz Bay

NOTE: *The area code for St. John is 340.*

Chateau Bordeaux, Route 10-Centerline Rd, ☎ 776-6611. International/Caribbean. $$$. Monday-Saturday, 10 am-4:30 pm; dinner seatings at 5:30 and 8:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Dinner reservations required.

You'll be served a fantastic meal here atop Bordeaux mountain, the highest point on the island. Lunch is outdoors on the patio, and consists of burgers, sandwiches and such. Dinner is in the air-conditioned dining room set with lace tablecloths. The menu features a variety of meats and seafood with interesting sauces prepared by chef John Bullock and his staff. Examples include herb-sauced lamb, fish poached in wine and stuffed pork tenderloin. The appetizers are especially cre-

ative, there's a good wine list, and you'll be tempted by cheesecake for dessert. Plan to arrive before dark so you can enjoy a fruit-flavored daiquiri while you watch the sun set.

Asolare, Route 20-North Shore Rd, ☎ 779-4747; Gourmet Asian. $$$. Dinner, 5:30 pm-9:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations required.

The views from this elegant old stone house on Caneel Hill just outside Cruz Bay are stunning. If you arrive before dark, you can watch the sun slip into Pillsbury Sound and the lights start to glitter on St. Thomas. Your dinner will be no less dazzling. The French chef, Vincent Daunay, creates entrées centered around a unique blend of Asian, Pacific Rim and European recipes which results in dishes such as fish sizzled in exotic spices and served with a fruity sauce, Peking duck sweetened with a nutty glaze and perfectly grilled steaks accompanied by ginger-spiked vegetables. After-dinner treats include palate-calming choices like tropical-fruit soufflés and homemade ice cream.

Paradiso, Mongoose Junction, ☎ 693-8899. Innovative American with an Italian twist. $$$. Monday-Saturday, 11 am-3 pm and 5:30 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended in high season.

This is one of the most popular and attractive restaurants in the overwhelmingly popular and attractive Mongoose Junction complex. A crowd gathers at the long brass-and-hardwood bar most evenings, and many people stay on to enjoy a dinner of traditional fare infused accompanied by unique sauces and intriguing ingredients prepared by chef Theodore Robinson. The air-conditioned stone-walled dining room is especially popular on warm afternoons, but the outdoor balcony is the place to people-watch after the sun goes down. While most of the entrées are on the expensive side, you can make a moderately-priced meal from the appetizers, and kids can select standard favorites from the children's menu. Or, go ahead and splurge on one of the outstanding fresh fish or veal dishes. You won't be sorry.

Morgan's Mango, Mongoose Junction, Cruz Bay, ☎ 693-8141; e-mail morgansmango@islands.vi. Upscale Caribbean. $$$. Daily, 5 pm-10:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended .

Claudia Deserafino, the Mango's Argentine owner, heads up a staff of friendly servers, talented bartenders and creative chefs. More than 30 frozen drinks are made at the huge wrap-around bar that encloses a garden-like dining room. The dinner menu reflects the tastes of various cultures that make up the Caribbean and may include dishes from Cuba, Jamaica and Haiti. A couple of vegetarian choices are available, including a grilled marinated veggie brochette. The seafood is depend-

ably fresh and includes choices such as "Voodoo Snapper" inspired by Haitian cuisine, and "Coconut Shrimp," a specialty on Saint Lucia. If you love your beef hot and spicy, try the Jamaican-spiced "Poppa's Pickapeppa Steak." Live entertainment and Margarita specials draw a crowd on Thursday nights.

Woody's Seafood Saloon, near Chase Bank, inland from the ferry dock, ☎ 779-4625; fax 779-4717; www.woodysseafood.com; e-mail woody@woodysseafood.com. Fish and traditional American. $. Monday-Thursday, 11 am-1 am; Friday-Sunday, 11 am-2 am. Credit cards accepted.

This popular hangout is just plain fun. Regulars say owner Todd "Woody" Mann puts on the best happy hour in the Caribbean from 3 pm until 6 pm every afternoon, and it's the only place on the island where you can get a full meal late at night. The signature "Bushwhacker" (similar to a white Russian), featuring five kinds of liquor, is a top-selling drink, but there's also an extensive list of other frozen drinks and a good choice of beers. The menu is surprisingly varied for such a casual setting and features food that tastes great with the icy drinks. Spicy fritters, breaded calamari, cheese-'n-jalapeño poppers and loaded 'tater skins head the list of appetizers. Combination seafood platters are favored by those looking for a serious meal. In addition, you can get thick burgers, fish sandwiches and Caesar salad with homemade dressing. You can't go wrong following the crowd to this casual indoor/outdoor eatery.

La Tapa, across from the Scotia Bank, ☎ 693-7755. Tapas and continental dishes. $$. Monday-Saturday, 6 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

This is one of the most delightfully surprising little restaurants in the Virgin Islands. *Tapas* are to the Spanish what hor d'oeuvres are to the French – exquisite bite-sized snacks to enjoy with icy drinks and warm friends. Here in Cruz Bay, the tiny meat, fish and vegetable treats are served in this bistro filled with local art. Owner Alexandra Ewald and her staff take pride in the preparation and presentation of the tapas, which pair well with a pitcher of freshly made sangria. The menu also includes full-course meals, featuring seafood and steaks flavored with exotic spices and served with island fruits and vegetables. Seating is limited, so call early for reservations.

The Lime Inn, Lemontree Mall, ☎ 776-6425 or 779-4199. Seafood/Caribbean. $$$. Monday-Friday, 11:30 am-3 pm, 5:30 pm-10 pm; Saturday, 5:30 pm-10:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

If you ask a resident where to get good local cuisine, the answer will often be The Lime Inn. This tropical open-air restaurant, located just east of Chase Manhattan Bank, features a long list of frozen drinks and non-alcoholic smoothies. The lunch menu offers several salads that may be topped with teriyaki, blackened or grilled chicken, shrimp or tenderloin. There's also a nice choice of sandwiches, including burgers. For dinner, you might start with brie en croûte or grilled portobello mushrooms, then sample the smoked fish salad. Entrées include coquille St. John, several shrimp dishes and filet mignon stuffed with crab or blue cheese. Everything comes with potato, rice or pasta and fresh bread. Richard Meyer is the owner and creative chef. His charming wife, Christine, greets guests at the door and ensures perfection in the dining room. Try to eat dinner here on Wednesdays, when the highlight is all-you-can-peel-and-eat shrimp.

Fish Trap, Cruz Bay/Rain Tree Inn, ☎ 693-9994; e-mail raintree@islands.vi. Seafood. $$. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 am-3 pm and 4:30 pm-9:30 pm; Sunday brunch, 10:30 am-2:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner and brunch.

Fish nets and windsocks decorate this garden terrace restaurant at the Rain Tree Inn, which sits behind the Mount Carmel Church across from Wharfside Village in Cruz Bay. Owned and operated by the Willis family for more than 25 years, this casual spot specializes in fresh fish favorites such as conch fritters, grilled tuna and fried mahi-mahi. Vegetarians have several choices, including a roasted vegetable and feta cheese sandwich, a black bean and cheese tostada and pasta primavera. At dinner, the lobster and shrimp scampi is popular, and there's always a tempting selection of fresh-catch dishes. Regulars know to save room for the coconut cake topped with hot rum caramel sauce.

The Willis family also owns and operates **Stone Terrace**, $$$, an elegant open-air restaurant overlooking Cruz Bay Harbor, across from Wharfside Village. The international menu changes each month and features seasonal favorites such as stuffed mushrooms, garlic-and-brie-glazed breast of duck and filet mignon topped with a spicy lobster sauce. The restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday-Sunday, 6 pm-10 pm. The bar opens an hour earlier and closes an hour later. Make reservations at ☎ 693-9370.

Serafina Seaside Bistro, Route 107, ☎ 693-5630. Continental. $$. Tuesday-Sunday, 11 am-9 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Come to Serafina for the waterfront ambiance and innovative cuisine. Menu choices range from spicy quesadillas to tender steaks, and almost everything is prepared with a creative twist. Seafood and pasta specials change daily, and the salads feature local produce. Happy hour runs daily from 3 pm-5:30 pm, and early-bird dinner specials are offered from 5:30 pm-7 pm everyday except Sunday and Monday. Sushi is the big draw on Tuesday nights, and beef-lovers show up on Saturday nights for prime rib and live music. On Sundays, the restaurant holds a popular jazz brunch.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you happen to be on the island on a full-moon evening, be sure to make a dinner reservation at the open-air Serafina. The view of the moon shining on Coral Bay is spectacular.*

Skinny Legs, Coral Bay/Route 107, ☎ 779-4982. Light meals. $. Daily, 11 am-9 pm. No credit cards.

Yachties, hammock dwellers, beach bums and just plain folks hang out and hideout at this super casual joint on Coral Bay. The menu, like the restaurant, is full of comforts. There are terrific burgers, great chili dogs, fresh grilled fish, friendly games of horseshoes and live sports on the satellite TV. What more could you want on a St. John afternoon?

East End

Vie's Snack Shack, Route 10/East End, ☎ 693-5033. West Indian snack food. $. Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am-5 pm. No credit cards.

Try to stop at Vie's when no one else is around so you can chat with this delightfully friendly St. John native. She's full of information and doesn't mind telling a few local tales while she fries your johnnycakes and garlic-laced chicken. Her family has lived on the east end of the island since 1836 and owns almost everything in this area, including Hansen Bay Camping and some rentable bungalows on the small beach across the street. You'll eat your meal on a picnic table under the trees with roosters and kittens at your feet. This is St. John as it used to be, and you may be tempted to stay forever. Be sure to sample the *patés* (fried meat or fish pies) and the homemade coconut tarts. Vie is one of the best cooks on the island, turning out scrumptious down-home meals in her simple roadside shack.

Nightlife

Anyone who says there's no nightlife on St. John simply isn't looking in the right place. While it's true that locals and visitors enjoy active days and tend to turn in early, that doesn't mean the island goes to sleep as soon as the sun sets.

Cruz Bay

Pusser's (☎ 693-8489), on the water at Wharfside Village, has three bars. The third-floor **Crow's Nest** is the best place to savor a "Painkiller," their famous signature drink. There's live music and dancing Fridays until midnight. Often, the Beach Bar features a band until 11 pm.

Woody's Seafood Saloon (☎ 779-4625) stays open until 1 am during the week and until 2 am on weekends. Customers have so much fun here, Woody runs their pictures on his website. Check out the latest postings at www.woodysseafood.com. The bar TV is tuned to live sporting events, and people gather there or at communal tables outside to chat about their day and enjoy a frozen drink or icy beer.

Olive'r Twist (☎ 693-9200), across from Chase Bank, is another popular hangout. The bar stays open until 2 am and serves powerful oversized martinis (olive or twist, get it?) as well as an extensive list of beers. Tuesdays are jazz night, and a pianist plays for the 4 pm-6 pm happy hour on Thursdays and Fridays.

The bar at **Caneel Bay Resort** (☎ 776-6111) has a band each night and draws a nicely dressed crowd. (Resort-casual wear is standard here.) Try their famous "Plantation Freeze," made with three kinds of rum.

Coccoloba, at the Westin Resort on Great Cruz Bay, stays open until 11 pm, Tuesday-Sunday. The open-air lounge sits on a hill with views of the bay across the resort's landscaped lawns and pool. This is a relaxing spot for a laid-back evening.

At Mongoose Junction, **Paradiso's** (☎ 693-8899) long beautiful bar is a popular after-dinner spot, but it closes at 10 pm. A band plays at **Morgan's Mango** (☎ 693-8141) on Thursdays for their "Margarita Night," but, again, the action stops at 10 pm. The bar at **Global Village** (☎ 693-8677) makes about 20 different frozen drinks and stays open until midnight. Try the rum-spiked chocolate-banana drink that tastes like a rich milkshake.

Coral Bay

In the Coral Bay area, **Shipwreck Landing** (☎ 693-5640) is the place for live entertainment. A variety of bands play most Wednesday-Sunday evenings until 11 pm, and the music may be anything from cool jazz to steamy reggae. **Skinny Legs** (☎ 779-4982) usually has a band on Friday nights during high season. At other times, the satellite TV shows live sporting events and customers challenge each other to a game of darts or horseshoes. It's impossible to be bored here, but the action ends at 9 pm.

Island Facts & Numbers

AIRPORT: Cyril E. King International Airport on St. Thomas ☎ 774-5100.

AREA CODE: The area code for all US Virgin Islands is 340. You may dial direct from the States, and cable service connects the islands to Europe and South America.

BANKS, ATMs: Most are open Monday-Thursday, 9 am-2:30 pm and Friday from 9:30 am-2 pm and 3:30 pm-5 pm. A 24-hour ATM is located at **Chase Manhattan Bank** in Cruz Bay, ☎ 776-6881.

DRIVING: Traffic stays to the left. The speed limit is 20 mph in towns and 35 mph in the countryside.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts, 60 cycles, as on the US mainland.

EMERGENCIES: Ambulance, ☎ 911; Fire Department, ☎ 911; Police, ☎ 911; **Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Clinic**, 28 Sussanaberg, Cruz Bay, ☎ 693-8900; **US Coast Guard Rescue**, ☎ 729-6800; hyperbaric chamber for divers, ☎ 776-8311.

GOVERNMENT: The US Virgin Islands are an unincorporated territory with a non-voting delegate elected to the US House of Representatives. Anyone born on the islands is a US citizen.

HURRICANE INFORMATION: www.gopbi.com/weather/storm or www.nhc.noaa.gov.

LIQUOR LAWS: The legal drinking age is 21, as on the US mainland. Minors may not enter bars or purchase liquor.

MONEY: The US dollar is the legal currency throughout the Virgin Islands. Travelers' checks and major credit cards are acceptable at most locations, but always carry some cash for smaller establishments.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES: ***USVI Playground*** and ***What To Do: St. Thomas/St. John*** are free publications that are available at hotels and other tourist-oriented locations throughout the island.

The St. John Guidebook is an entertaining award-winning publication that is distributed free to visitors at all tourist-oriented locations. You may order a copy before you leave home by sending $4 to Great Dane Inc., PO Box 37, St. John, USVI 00831. E-mail the publisher at stjguide@islands.vi.

TAXES: There is no sales tax or departure tax. An 8% surcharge is added to all hotel bills, and the St. John Accommodations Council collects a voluntary $1-per-day surcharge that is used to fund non-profit island projects.

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY INFORMATION: ☎ 913.

TOURIST INFORMATION: In the US, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Division of Tourism**, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 ☎ 800-372-USVI (800-372-8784) or 212-332-2222; fax 212-332-2223; e-mail info@usvi.net.

You may also get information from **The Caribbean Information Office**, ☎ 800-621-1270 (in the US); 847-699-7570 (outside the US); fax 847-699-7583, or from **The St. Thomas/St. John Hotel & Tourism Association**, PO Box 2300, Veterans Drive Station, St. Thomas, USVI 00803.

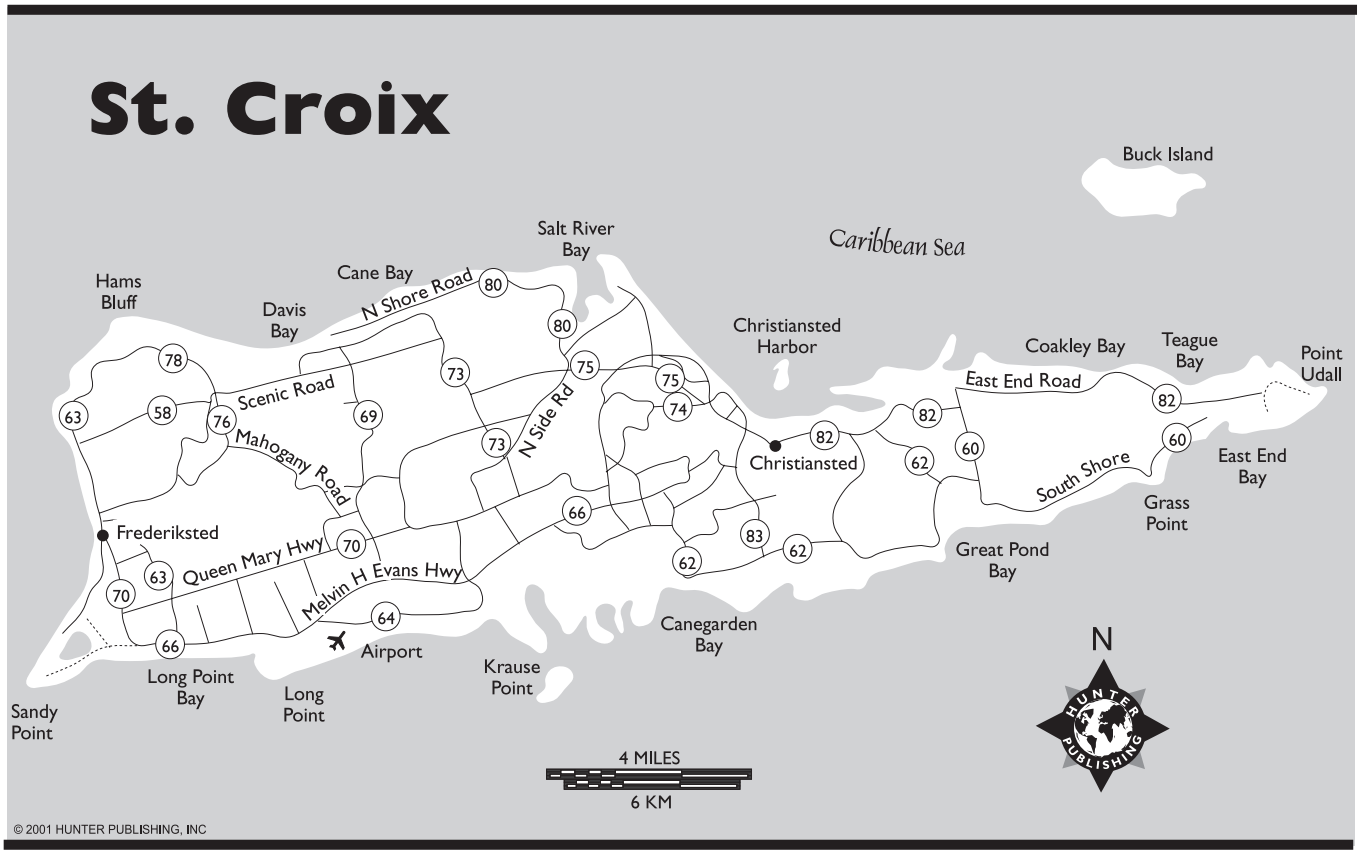
In Canada, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 3300 Bloor Street West, Suite 3120, Centre Tower, Toronto, Ontario M8X 2X3, ☎ 416-233-1414; fax 416-233-9367.

In the UK, contact **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 2 Cinnamon Row, Plantation Wharf, York Place, London, England SW11 3TW, ☎ 0171-978-5262; fax 0171-924-3171.

On St. John, stop by the **Tourist Office** near the ferry dock in Cruz Bay to pick up information. It's open Monday-Friday, 8 am-noon and 1 pm-5 pm. ☎ 776-6450.

WEBSITES: www.usvi.net; www.stjohnisland.com; www.usvi.org/tourism; www.americasparadise.com; www.stjohnusvi.com; http://st-john.com.

WEDDINGS: It's easy to get married in the USVI. Call the Department of Tourism for a brochure called ***Getting Married in the United States Virgin Islands***, ☎ 800-372-USVI. To apply for a license, write to the Territorial Court of the Virgin Islands, Box 70, St. Thomas, USVI 00804, ☎ 340-774-6680.


St. Croix
Buck Island
Caribbean Sea
Salt River Bay
Cane Bay
N Shore Road
Hams Bluff
Davis Bay
Christiansted Harbor
Coakley Bay
Teague Bay
Point Udall
East End Road
Scenic Road
Mahogany Road
N Side Rd
Christiansted
South Shore
East End Bay
Grass Point
Frederiksted
Queen Mary Hwy
Melvin H Evans Hwy
Great Pond Bay
Canegarden Bay
Airport
Krause Point
Long Point Bay
Long Point
Sandy Point
N
4 MILES
6 KM
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

St. Croix

Overview

Rolling hills, uncrowded beaches, vine-covered plantation ruins and charming Danish architecture make St. Croix (say *croy*) the most diversified of the three US Virgin Islands. **Point Udall**, the easternmost point of the United States, is arid and rocky. The island grows wetter and wider as it spreads westward, and a tropical forest covers the lush northwest side. Between the scrub land and the forest are 28 miles of northern hills and southern plains ringed by an array of beaches. **Buck Island**, off the northeast shore, is part of the US National Park system and is St. Croix's most popular watersports area.

The island isn't as densely populated or commercial as St. Thomas. Nor is it as slow-paced and ecologically-preserved as St. John. With 84 square miles, St. Croix is larger than either of its sister Virgins. Its economy is bolstered by industry as well as tourism. The 55,000 residents, mostly native born Cruzans (or Crucians) or transplanted North American "Continentals," welcome approximately two million visitors each year.

Christiansted, the capital, is built on the north shore around a coral bay that once served as a Danish port. Its historic streets are lined with colorful buildings and covered passageways that house duty-free shops and fine restaurants. **Frederiksted**, on the west coast, is a tiny town with a few quaint shops and some notable Victorian architecture. Nearby are well-preserved and renovated plantations that are open to the public.

A Brief History

When Christopher Columbus and his crew anchored at **Salt River** on St. Croix's north coast on November 14, 1493, they were attacked by Carib Indians. The Caribs called their island *Cibuguiera,* which meant "stony land." This began a century-long battle for the island the Spaniards renamed *Santa Cruz* (Holy Cross), and by the end of the 16th century, the natives had been slaughtered or relocated, and the island was uninhabited.

OF HISTORICAL NOTE

Archeologists have discovered remains of Taino/Arawak and Carib Indians who lived on St. Croix as early as 2500 BC. Taino/Arawak Indians called the island *Ay Ay*, which meant "river." A religious center used by these early inhabitants was uncovered in the Salt River area, near the spot where Columbus first came ashore.

Seven Flags Over St. Croix

Early in the 1600s, Europeans began to realize the value of possessions in the Caribbean, and several countries sent groups to colonize the island of Santa Cruz. During the next few years, the **English**, **Dutch** and **Spanish** battled for control of the island, and each country succeeded in flying its flag for brief periods.

In 1650, two shiploads of **French** soldiers captured the island and renamed it St. Croix. Three hundred colonists and two governors attempted to permanently settle the land and establish towns. However, they were plagued by illness and decided to burn acres of forest because they believed disease originated there. After many deaths, the French sold St. Croix to Governor De Poincy of St. Kitts.

De Poincy used St. Croix as his private retreat for several years, then deeded it to the Knights of **Malta**, a quasi-religious group made up of aristocratic youths. In 1665, the young Knights sold their holdings to the French West Indian Company, and the island returned to French rule under Governor DuBois. This time around, the French established approximately 90 plantations that succeeded in producing large crops of tobacco, cotton, sugar and indigo.

After more than 30 years of prosperity, the colonists were hit once again by drought and disease and the French West Indian Company declared bankruptcy. King Louis XIV took possession of the island and ordered all French citizens to return home. In 1695, St. Croix was left virtually uninhabited.

The **Danish West India and Guinea Company** bought St. Croix from France in 1733 for a sum of $150,000 and encouraged immigrants from other countries to settle on the island. People from many nations flocked to the St. Croix, but the English quickly dominated the population. Slave labor allowed sugar plantations to flourish, the Danes ruled and English was spoken in the streets.

St. Croix raised the American flag in 1917 when Denmark sold the western Virgin Islands to the **United States** for $25 million. At that time, the sugar boom was over, slaves had been freed and the island had suffered a series of hurricanes, earthquakes and fires. Tourism began to turn the economy around after World War II. Further prosperity developed when the Hess Oil refinery and the Harvey aluminum plant were opened in the 1960s.

Getting There

By Air

All airlines land at the recently remodeled and renamed **Henry E. Rohison Airport** on the southern coast, about seven miles from the town of Christiansted. Formerly called the Alexander Hamilton Airport, in honor of the US Secretary of Treasury in the 1700s, the airport is now named after a well-known Crucian World War II pilot. The Tourist Information Office has a well-stocked counter inside the modern terminal. Major rental-car companies are on site.

Airline service and schedules change frequently and new flights are being added as St. Croix becomes more popular, so call a travel agent or check with the major carriers about current flights. **American Airlines** (☎ 800-433-7300) flies directly to St. Croix from Miami. **US Airways** (☎ 800-428-4322) has direct flights from Philadelphia. **Continental Express** (☎ 800-231-0856) connects with Continental's mainline flights from Houston, Cleveland and Newark through San Juan. **United Express** (☎ 800-241-6522) connects with mainline United flights through San Juan and St. Thomas. In addition, **American Eagle** (☎ 800-433-7300) and **Cape Air** (☎ 800-352-0714) regularly make the 40-mile trip from St. Thomas and the 75-mile trip from Puerto Rico. **Air Sunshine** (☎ 340-778-8900) offers service from San Juan.

Taxi vans meet all flights and carry up to eight passengers to various stops in one direction. Fares are regulated; expect to pay $5 per person for transportation to hotels near Christiansted and $4 per person for taxi service to locations near Frederiksted. In addition, drivers charge 50 cents per piece for average-sized luggage.

By Seaplane & Hydrofoil

Seaborne Aviation (☎ 888-359-8687 or 777-4491 or 773-6442; e-mail SeaborneAssist@hotmail.com) offers frequent seaplane flights from the harbor at Charlotte Amalie to the harbor at Christiansted. If you're coming from the British Virgin Islands, Seaborne flies from the ferry terminal in West End, Tortola to Christiansted.

Virgin Hydrofoil Services (☎ 776-7417) operates the ***Katrun II*** between Charlotte Amalie and Christiansted Friday through Monday. The 40-mile trip takes an hour and 15 minutes, and one-way tickets cost $45. Morning and afternoon departures from each island are convenient for both day-trippers and over-nighters.

NOTE: *The area code for St. Croix is 340.*

■ Getting Around

By Car

Primary roads on St. Croix are paved and well maintained, but secondary roads are often rough and poorly marked. Only one highway on the island has four lanes and a 55-mph speed limit. The rest are two-lane roads with a speed limit of 35 mph in the countryside and 20 mph in town.

A variety of rental cars is available from agencies at the airport and in both of the main towns, and a valid driver's license, issued the US, UK or Canada may be used for up to 90 days. Agencies usually include unlimited mileage in the rental rate. Gas prices tend to be on the low side because of the local Hess Oil Refinery. Daily rental rates run between $45 and $55, and you should reserve a car in advance during high season. If you plan to explore along the scenic back roads – and you should – consider paying a little extra for a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Remember to drive on the left.

RENTAL CAR AGENCIES	
Advantage	☎ 779-3900; fax 778-1951
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084 or 778-9355 (airport); 773-0103 (Kings Alley/seaplane landing)
Budget	☎ 888-227-3359 or 778-9636 (airport) or 713-9289 (King Christian Hotel); www.budgetstt.com
Centerline	☎ 888-288-8755 or 778-0450 (phone/fax)
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3131 or 774-0841 or 778-1402
Horizon	☎ 888-319-RENT or 779-3900
Judi of Croix	☎ 888-729-3355 or 773-2123; e-mail denner@viaccess.net
Olympic-Ace	☎ 888-878-4227 or 773-8000; fax 772-1617
Thrifty	☎ 800-367-2277 or 773-7200; fax 773-7202

By Taxi

By law, all taxi drivers on St. Croix must carry an official taxi tariff list and present it when a prospective passenger asks about the fare from one point to another. It's always a good idea to do this before you climb into a cab, even though most drivers on the island are remarkably honest and friendly. Be aware that there are additional charges for radio-dispatched cabs and trips that take place between midnight and 6 am. If you request a private cab, the driver is allowed to charge up to four times the additional-passenger rate.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Look for the official taxi tariff schedule in each free issue of* **St. Croix This Week**, *found at the airport, tourist offices and all hotels.*

In addition to the taxi stands at the airport exit, you'll find drivers available in Christiansted on King Street near Government House and at Market Square. In Frederiksted, taxis may be located at Fort Frederik. You can stop by anytime to arrange a trip later in the day. Contact the Taxi Commission (☎ 773-8294) if you have a problem with a driver or leave something in a cab.

TAXI COMPANIES	
St. Croix Taxi Association (airport)	☎ 778-1088
Antilles Taxi Service (Christiansted)	☎ 773-5020
Caribbean Taxi and Tours (Christiansted)	☎ 773-9799
Cruzan Taxi Association (Christiansted)	☎ 773-6388
Territorial Taxicab Umbrella	☎ 692-9744
Discovery Tours (Frederiksted)	☎ 772-4492
Frederiksted Taxi Service (Frederiksted)	☎ 772-4775

By Bus

Public transportation is limited on St. Croix, but you can go from the airport to both Christiansted and Frederiksted on an air-conditioned **VITRAN** bus. Buses also run on a 40-minute schedule between Tide Village, east of Christiansted, to Fort Frederik in Frederiksted from 5:30 am until 9:30 pm daily. Look for VITRAN bus stop signs along the route. The fare is $1 (55¢ for anyone 55 years of age or older) each way, and you must have the exact change. For information and schedules, call the VITRAN office, ☎ 773-1290.

LIMO SERVICE

Special occasion transportation is offered by **PM Services** (☎ 773-5443; e-mail pms@vi-access.net). A Rolls Royce will meet you at the airport or pick you up at your hotel for an evening on the town, a sightseeing tour or a shopping trip.

■ Touring the Island

Guided Tours

St. Croix Heritage Tours has been a licensed tour operator in the US Virgin Islands for over 10 years and its staff has over 100 years of combined experience with cultural aspects of the island. Their guided group and custom-tailored tours of Christiansted and Frederiksted include visits to historic buildings, courtyards and market places. In addition, there are fascinating trips to the lesser-known plantations and nature tours to ecological sites.

Contact them for information about scheduled and private tours. ☎ 778-6997; fax 719-9079; www.stcroixtours.com; e-mail scheritage-tours@worldnet.att.net.

Eagle Safari Tours takes visitors on a four-hour island tour in an open-air safari bus Monday-Saturday. The tour leaves from Government House on King Street in Christiansted at 9:15 am and returns at 1:30 pm. Call for information and reservations, ☎ 778-3313 or 771-2871; fax 773-1672.

Sweeny's St. Croix Safari Tours leaves from the Old Scale House near the wharf in Christiansted Monday-Saturday at 10 am and returns at 3:30 pm. The tour includes stops at historical spots and guides offer abundant information about the island's culture, history and vegetation. Call for information and reservations, ☎ 773-6700.

Caribbean Adventure Tours offers a variety of kayaking, hiking, photography and ecological tours to off-the-beaten-track locations. Guides are knowledgeable, entertaining and experienced. Call for a schedule of destinations, ☎ 773-4599; e-mail andycroix@worldnet.att.net.

Olu and **Lumumba** are expert naturalists and herbalists who lead nature hikes in the forest. Call to set up a hike or get information about their "Maroon Life Weekends." ☎ 778-6164, 772-0827 or 772-4079.

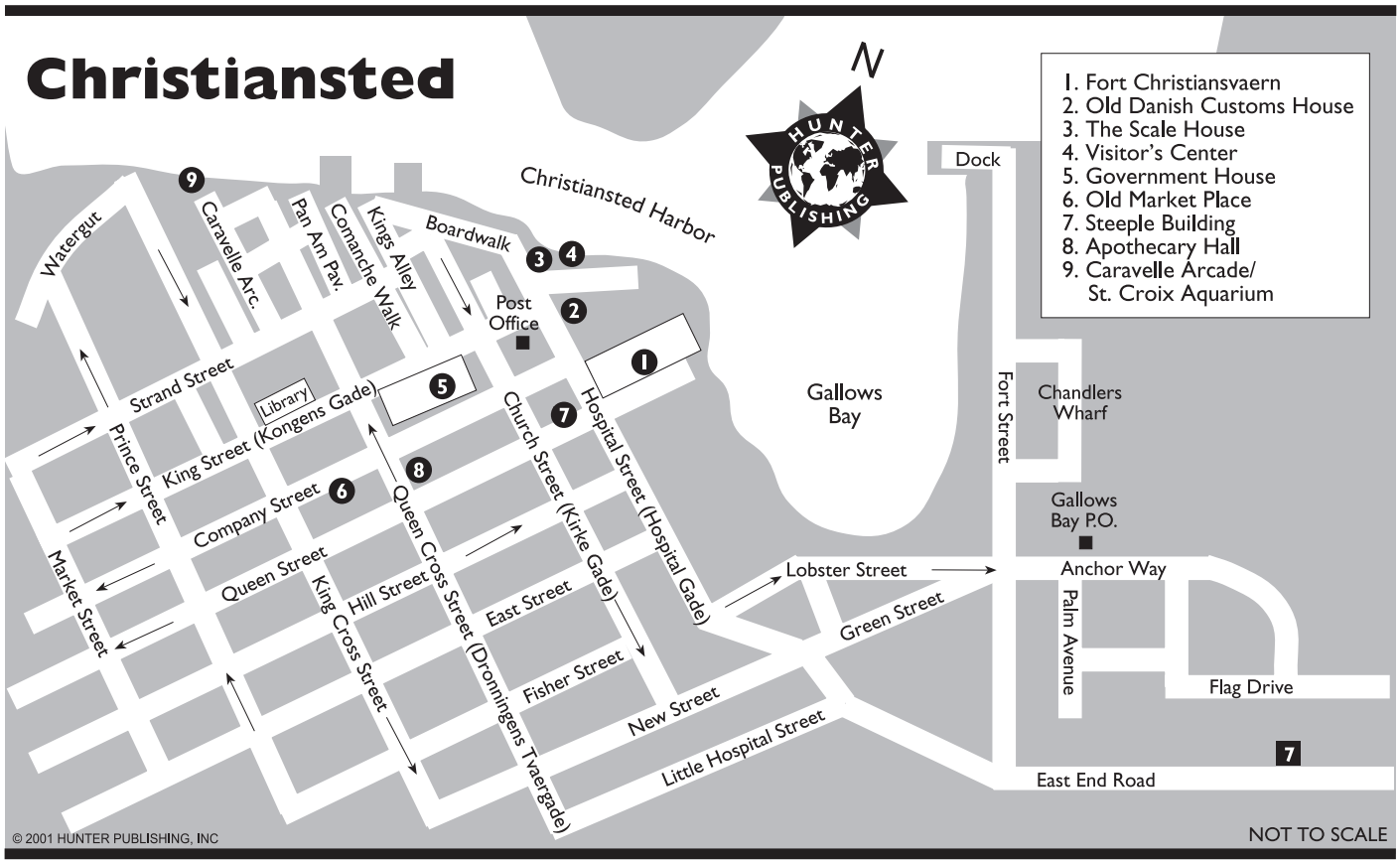
Self-Guided Tours

A Walking Tour of Christiansted

Driving Christiansted's narrow one-way streets and finding a parking spot near the center of town can be a problem, so it's best to park at the fort on Hospital Street and tour the town on foot.

This is the most picturesque and interesting town in the Virgin Islands, and a large part of it is recognized as a National Historic Site. Founded in 1734, soon after the Danish West India and Guinea Company bought St. Croix from France, Christiansted served as the capital of the Danish West Indies from 1755 until 1871. The narrow streets were designed for mule-driven carts, and the colorful buildings were built to survive hurricanes and take advantage of cool ocean breezes. Today, chic boutiques, trendy restaurants and intimate hotels occupy the former homes and businesses of the wealthy Danes.

Begin your walking tour at **Fort Christiansvaern,** a yellow-brick bastion that stands watch over the town's harbor. It was completed in


Christiansted
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
1. Fort Christiansvaern
2. Old Danish Customs House
3. The Scale House
4. Visitor's Center
5. Government House
6. Old Market Place
7. Steeple Building
8. Apothecary Hall
9. Caravelle Arcade/ St. Croix Aquarium
Christiansted Harbor
Dock
Watergut
Caravelle Arc.
Pan Am Pav.
Comanche Walk
Kings Alley
Boardwalk
Post Office
Strand Street
Library
King Street (Kongens Gade)
Prince Street
Company Street
Queen Street
Market Street
Queen Cross Street (Dronningens Tvaergade)
King Cross Street
Hill Street
East Street
Church Street (Kirke Gade)
Hospital Street (Hospital Gade)
Fisher Street
New Street
Little Hospital Street
Gallows Bay
Fort Street
Chandlers Wharf
Gallows Bay P.O.
Lobster Street
Anchor Way
Green Street
Palm Avenue
Flag Drive
East End Road
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC
NOT TO SCALE

1749 in a star-shaped design and partially rebuilt in 1771 after it was damaged by a hurricane. Despite several additions and alterations, the fort is an excellent example of colonial military architecture and is maintained as a historic monument by the National Park Service. Take time to explore the barracks, kitchen and dungeons. The fort is open weekdays, 8 am-5 pm, and weekends, 9 am-5 pm. There is a $2 admission fee, which also includes admittance to the Steeple Building. ☎ 773-1460; fax 773-5995.

Leaving the fort, walk across the grassy lawn of the seven-acre **D. Hamilton Jackson Park** to **The Old Danish Customs House**. The park is named for a labor leader and judge who started the first independent newspaper on the island. The National Park Service has its headquarters in the former Customs House, which was built by the Danes in 1751. The lovely sweeping staircase was added in 1829.

Cross King Street and continue walking toward the water to **The Scale House**, a yellow building near the wharf that was built in 1856. Stop at the **Visitor's Center** for information on all the historic sites in town, then spend some time admiring the building that once served as a weighing and inspection site for goods passing through the port. The building and Visitor's Center is open weekdays, 8 am-5 pm, and on weekends, 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 773-1460.

When you leave The Scale House, follow King Street away from the harbor until you see **Government House** on the left, just before the intersection of Queen Cross Street. This elegant building is actually two houses that were built in the 1700s and joined in 1830 to accommodate the offices of the Danish government. Today it is used by the US Virgin Islands as administrative offices. If the gate is open, go into the inner courtyard to see the gardens and small pools. A majestic staircase leads to a ballroom that is used for official government gatherings. ☎ 773-1404.

Across Queen Cross Street you'll see **Lord God of Saboth Lutheran Church**, which was built around 1740 by members of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Lutheran congregation that originally met in the **Steeple Building**, moved to this structure in 1831 and added the Gothic Revival-style tower over the front entrance in 1834.

Turn back along King Street to Queen Cross Street and take a right to get to Company Street, where you'll find **Old Market Place** a block down on the right. The open-air building that now serves as a farmer's market stands on the site used by slave traders in the 1700s. Shop here

for the island's freshest fruits and vegetables, on sale Monday-Saturday, 7 am-6 pm.

Walking back along Company Street toward Fort Christiansvaern until you reach **Christiansted Apothecary Hall**. A drugstore was founded here in 1828 by a Danish pharmacist, and continued to operate as a dispensary until 1970. Recently, the property was reopened as a museum, featuring more than 600 of the original pharmaceutical wares and equipment. You can visit here free of charge, Monday-Saturday, 10 am-4 pm. ☎ 772-0598.

Just before you arrive back at the fort, you'll see the white **Steeple Building** with a red-topped belfry on the right side of Company Street. It was the first church constructed by the Danes after their colonization of the island and is now a museum displaying archeological artifacts from Carib and Arawak Indian settlements as well as relics from colonial-era sugar plantations. Admission is $2, and the same ticket allows you admission into Fort Christiansvaern. The museum is open daily, 8 am-5 pm. ☎ 773-1460.

Before you leave the downtown area, stop at the newly enlarged **St. Croix Aquarium** in the **Caravelle Arcade** between Strand Street and the waterfront, a block west of Queen Cross Street. This is the ideal place to get acquainted with the creatures that live in the waters surrounding St. Croix. More than 100 types of marine animals are displayed here, along with a fascinating exhibit called Night Creatures. All the creatures are returned to their sea homes on a regular rotation so that none is held captive for a long period. During a 30-minute tour, a knowledgeable biologist spoon-feeds you invaluable information about mating habits, feeding preferences and reef conservation. Afterward, you can get friendly with the harmless critters living in the Touch Pond. Admission is $4.50 for adults and $2 for kids. Visit Tuesday-Saturday, 11 am-4 pm. ☎ 773-8995.

OFFSHORE TRIP

Hop aboard a ferry at Christiansted Harbor for a quick ride over to nearby **Protestant Cay**. The little dab of land got its name in the 17th century when French protestant refugees from the predominantly-Catholic island of St. Christopher (now St. Kitts) settled among the Dutch in the area that is now Christiansted.

These exiles were denied gravesites on the main island, and were forced to take their loved ones out to the cay (pronounced like "key") for burial. Today, the little islet is a refuge for the St. Croix ground lizard and home to **Hotel on the Cay**, where you can enjoy watersports or have lunch while enjoying a wonderful view of Christ- iansted. ☎ 800-524-2035 or 773-2035; fax 773-7046.

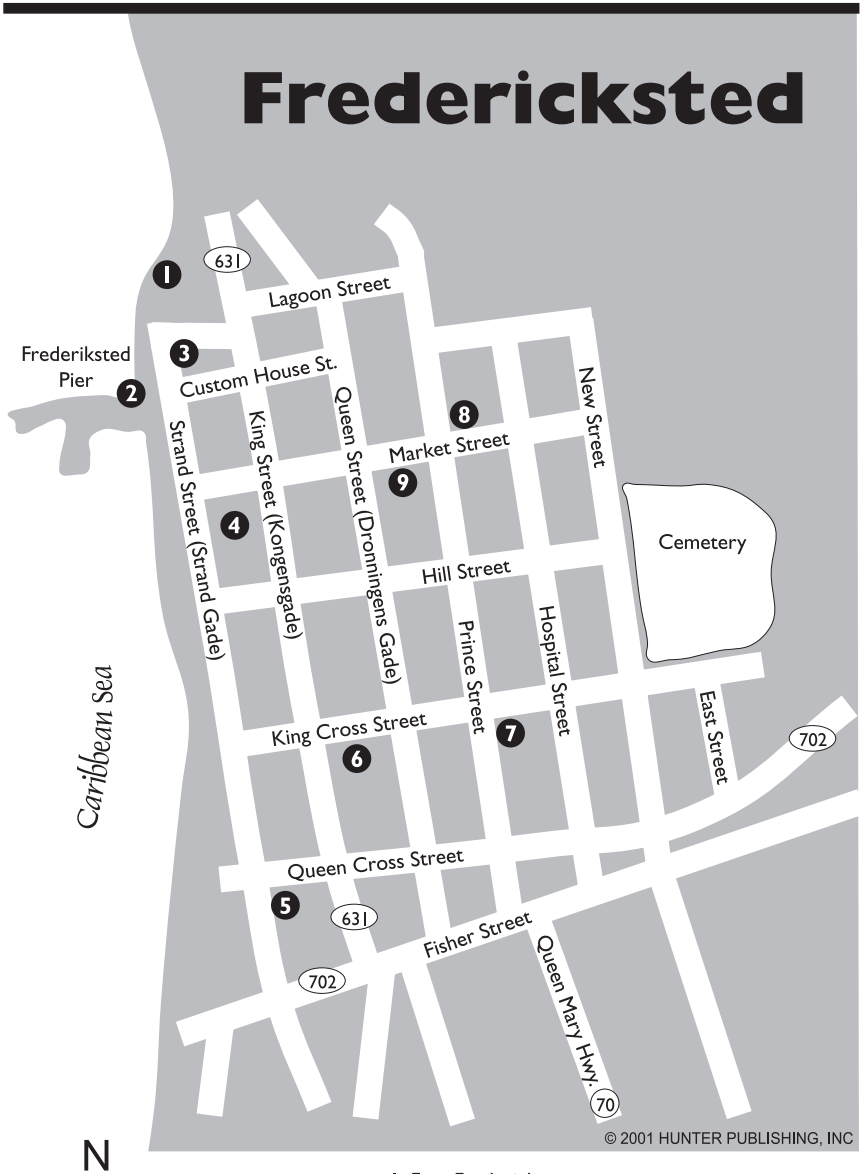
A Walking Tour of Frederiksted

St. Croix's *other* town might be considered a work in progress. It isn't as pretty or lively as Christiansted, but there have been great improvements in recent years, and its west-end location puts it close to many of the island's best attractions.

Don't plan to spend a lot of time here, unless a cruise ship is in port. Then the lethargic little village stirs itself into a frenzy of activity with **Harbour Nights,** a street party featuring bands, mocko jumbies and an arts and crafts market. Check the current edition of *St. Croix This Week* or ☎ 772-0357 for a listing of ship arrivals.

MOCKO JUMBIES

Mocko jumbies are stilt-walkers dressed in colorful costumes who perform at festivals, march in parades and entertain at special events. Many islanders of African descent love traditional stories of jumbies, or ghosts, who appear mysteriously to take the blame for bad luck or the credit for good fortune. Slaves told children stories of jumbies to coax children into good behavior. In some tales, jumbies appear in threatening situations to conquer bad guys and rescue the righteous. These stories are still popular today, and modern Caribbean and African writers often use jumbie-like characters in their stories.


Fredericksted
631
Lagoon Street
Frederiksted Pier
Custom House St.
King Street (Kongensgade)
Queen Street (Dronningens Gade)
Strand Street (Strand Gade)
New Street
Market Street
Cemetery
Hill Street
Prince Street
Hospital Street
East Street
702
King Cross Street
Queen Cross Street
631
Fisher Street
702
Queen Mary Hwy.
70
Caribbean Sea
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC
N
1. Fort Frederick
2. Visitor's Center
3. Old Customs House
4. Victoria House
5. Old Public Library
6. Apothecary Hall
7. St. Pauls' Anglican Church
8. St. Patrick's Catholic Church
9. Public Market Place
NOT TO SCALE

Do see the fort. It sits beside the cruise-ship pier and is every bit as fascinating as Fort Christiansvaern. The Danes built **Fort Frederik** in the mid 1700s to deter smugglers. They named it for their monarch, King Frederik V. The date 1760 is inscribed over the entrance and signifies the year that the fort was completed. The bronze bust on the lawn outside the fort is of Moses "Buddhoe" Gottlieb, who led 8,000 slaves on a rebellious march on the fort July 3, 1848. In response, Governor General Peter Von Scholten stood up in his carriage parked outside the fort and announced the emancipation of all slaves in the Danish West Indies. Today, you can tour the restored courtyard, stables, officers' kitchen, detention cells, a small art gallery and a museum with interesting historical relics and police memorabilia. Commandant's quarters are on the second floor. The fort was recently declared a National Historic Landmark. There's no admission fee. Open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-4:30 pm; Saturday, 1 am-4 pm. ☎ 772-2021.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *A **Visitor's Center** is located at the pier adjacent to the fort. Stop in for maps and brochures on weekdays between 8 am and 5 pm. ☎ 772-0357.*

The Old Customs House is across Lagoon Street from the fort. It was built in the late 1800s and renovated after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The outdoor fountain was added in 1998 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of emancipation.

Much of Frederiksted was destroyed by fire in 1878, so the predominant architecture of the oldest buildings is Victorian. An excellent example is **Victoria House**, a block south of the Old Customs House on Strand Street. Since this is a private home, you can't tour the interior, but architecture buffs will be interested in the elaborate gingerbread trim.

Other sites with interesting architecture line the main road. From Victoria House, stroll up Strand Street and notice the old archways and buildings that face the waterfront. Just past Queen Cross Street, you'll find the still-operative **Old Public Library** (☎ 772-0315), which was

built in 1803 and at one time owned by a man named G. A. Bell, who decorated the central staircase with bells in 1888. Return down Strand one block to King Cross Street and turn right. A block up on the right is historic **Apothecary Hall**, which continues as a drugstore (☎ 772-1890).

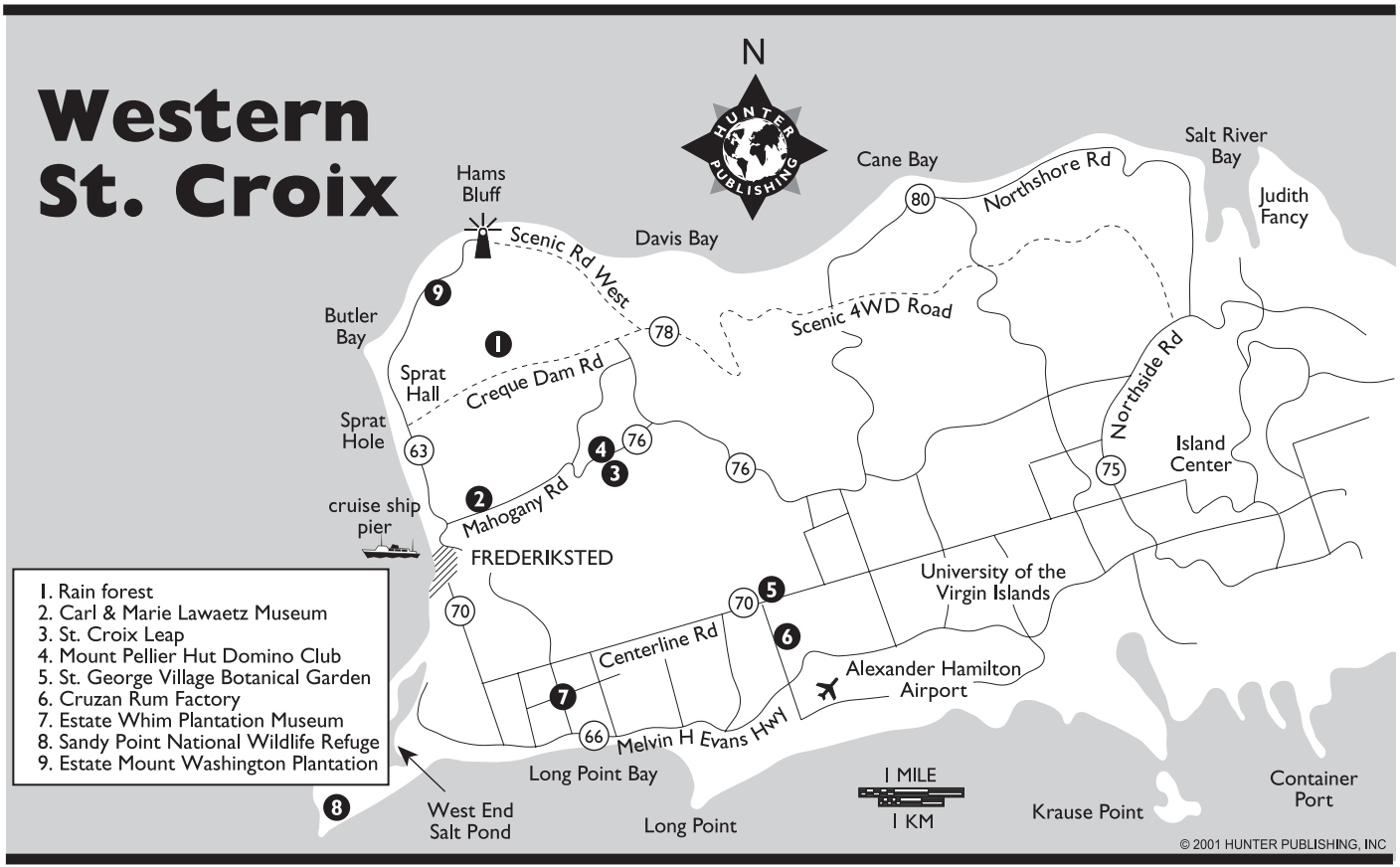
A couple of blocks farther on, at the corner of King Cross and Prince Streets, is **St. Paul's Anglican Church**, which is a recently restored early 19th-century mix of Georgian and Gothic Revival architecture with a lovely sandstone tower (☎ 772-0818). Back toward the north on Prince Street is **St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church** (☎ 772-5052). It was built in 1843 and has three spires. The doors are usually locked, unless a service is in progress, but if you can get inside, notice the fine woodwork. Diagonally across Market Street, you may find locals passing the time among vendors selling fresh produce on the spot that has been the **Public Market Place** since 1751.

The Western Countryside by Car

Beginning at the western end near Frederiksted, take Route 76 (Mahogany Road) east through the towering trees of the **Rain Forest**. This northwest section of the island receives only about 40 inches of rain each year, so technically it's a *tropical forest*, since a true rain forest gets at least 80 inches of precipitation each year. However, the area is a lovely tropical woodland with centuries-old mahogany, silk-cotton, samaan and turpentine trees mixed with tangled vines and thick ferns.

As you drive slowly through the forest, watch for hummingbirds, yellow warblers and bananaquits (the national bird). Well-worn paths lead off road, and you may want to stop and explore for a short distance. The best hikes are along unpaved roads and trails found north of Route 76. (See *Hiking*, page 189-191, for more information.)

The Carl and Marie Lawaetz Museum is located at Estate Little La Grange just over a mile east of Frederiksted. The former sugar plantation became a museum under the direction of the St. Croix Landmarks Society, but members of the Lawaetz family still live in the main house, and Irene Lawaetz conducts tours for visitors. The experience is somewhat like visiting distant cousins while passing through town. You'll be shown the dining room that is furnished with items bought second-


Western St. Croix
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Hams Bluff
Scenic Rd West
Davis Bay
Cane Bay
Salt River Bay
Judith Fancy
Northshore Rd
80
Butler Bay
9
1
78
Scenic 4WD Road
Sprat Hall
Creque Dam Rd
Sprat Hole
63
4
3
76
76
Northside Rd
75
Island Center
cruise ship pier
2
Mahogany Rd
FREDERIKSTED
70
70
5
University of the Virgin Islands
6
Centerline Rd
7
Alexander Hamilton Airport
66
Melvin H Evans Hwy
Long Point Bay
1 MILE
1 KM
Container Port
Krause Point
8
West End Salt Pond
Long Point
1. Rain forest
2. Carl & Marie Lawaetz Museum
3. St. Croix Leap
4. Mount Pellier Hut Domino Club
5. St. George Village Botanical Garden
6. Cruzan Rum Factory
7. Estate Whim Plantation Museum
8. Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge
9. Estate Mount Washington Plantation
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

hand by Danish farmer Carl Lawaetz in 1896, and the kitchen that was added in 1909. You even get to peek into the upstairs bedrooms to admire the original mahogany four-poster beds with mosquito netting. Irene enjoys telling family legends and doesn't mind answering questions about life on the estate. Tours are given Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am-3 pm. Admission is $5 for adults and $1 for children. ☎ 772-0555 or 772-1539.

St. Croix Leap Project, two miles from Frederiksted on Route 76, is an open-air workshop for artisans who craft tables, mirror frames, carving boards, statuettes and other items from local fallen wood – no trees are cut down. Their works are for sale, and the shop is open Monday-Friday, 9 am-5:30 pm; Saturday, 10 am-4 pm. ☎ 772-0421.

Nearby, **Mt. Pellier Hut Domino Club** looks like a rundown shack, but actually offers a unique attraction – beer-drinking pigs. They've been featured on TV's *Inside Edition* and have become quite accustomed to their star status. Stop at the bar to buy a can of $2 beer from Norma the bartender. It's non-alcoholic at the request of the Humane Society, after several recently-departed animals were found to have nasty cases of cirrhosis. Take your room-temperature beer out to the tidy enclosed pens where five hogs wait for their treat. Hand the unopened can to Oreo, Tony, J.J., Shily or Toni and stand back while the beast opens the can and gulps the beer. If this spectacle stirs up your own thirst, head back to the bar and order a MammaWanna, a tasty drink reported to be a medicinal aphrodisiac. The Domino Club is open daily from 8 am "till the last customer leaves." ☎ 772-9914.

At the intersection of Route 76 and Route 705, turn right and drive south, then take another right onto Route 70 (Centerline Road or Queen Mary Highway) to head back west. A sign marking the palm-shaded lane that leads to **St. George Village Botanical Garden** is on the right side soon after you turn onto Centerline Road. Be sure to have plenty of film in your camera, because you'll want pictures of this lush 16-acre oasis built around the ruins of an 18th-century sugar plantation that is registered as a National Historic Site. Pick up a self-guiding tour map at the visitors' center in the Great Hall that was built to join two original workers' houses. This will guide you through the grounds, which include examples of the dry-to-wet ecosystems on St. Croix. An old Danish cemetery is across from the Great Hall with graves dating from 1733 to 1917. The grounds themselves were once the site of an Arawak Indian Village from 100 to 900 AD. The Botanical Gardens are open daily, 9 am-5 pm, November-May, and Tuesday-

Saturday, 9 am-4 pm, June-October. Admission is $5 for adults and $1 for children. ☎ 692-2874.

Leaving the Botanical Gardens, turn right then immediately left to go south on Route 64 (West Airport Road) to visit the **Cruzan Rum Factory**. St. Croix's Cruzan rum is distilled by the Virgin Islands Rum Industries among the ruins of Estate Diamond Plantation. The headquarters have recently moved into the renovated Diamond Greathouse, a stunning white-trimmed green building that was built in 1920. Guided tours include an audio-visual presentation that explains the intricate process of making top-quality aged rum and a visit to the factory. The half-hour presentation ends with a complimentary rum drink at a bar displaying old and new bottles. You may purchase bottles to take home (remember that US citizens are allowed to return with five liters of duty-free liquor, plus an extra bottle if it is produced in the Virgin Islands). Tours are given Monday-Friday, 9 am-11:30 am and 1 pm-4:15 pm. The charge is $4. ☎ 692-2280. Rum is tightly woven into the history and culture of the Caribbean and its production is steeped in tradition. Whether you care for the drink or not, its story is captivating.

CARIBBEAN RUM

Rumbullion is an obsolete Old English word that was commonly used in the 1600s to describe an intoxicated person. When West Indian sailors brewed up a rough-edged liquor from sugar cane to ease their long nights at sea, they called it rum.

The byproduct of refining sugar is molasses, and early Caribbean plantations spawned gallons of the stuff. It naturally followed that they would ferment the thick, sticky-sweet syrup into rum. Most rums have a sharp bite and primarily are mixed with fruit juices to make such drinks as piña coladas, daiquiris and other tropical drinks. But the best rums are smooth enough to drink straight, like a fine brandy.

A rum's color depends on the way it is aged, and the darker varieties extract their tint and distinct flavor from long stints in oak barrels. St. Croix's **Cruzan Rum** is aged in handcrafted American oak casks for a minimum of two years. The company is renowned for producing excellent light and dark rums. Cruzan Rum makes an excellent souvenir or gift from the Virgin Islands (you can sample several varieties at the distillery). Connoisseurs favor Cruzan Light Dry and Cruzan Premium Estate Diamond, and you may want to pick up one of the fruit flavors to round out your six-bottle duty-free limit.

Return to Route 70/Centerline Road and drive west, a left turn. **Estate Whim Plantation Museum** is on the left, about two miles before you reach Frederiksted. Allow plenty of time at this well-preserved estate that brings to life the historical time when slave labor provided great wealth to Danish plantation owners. There's an exquisite neoclassical-style Greathouse that was built in the 1700s with three-foot-thick stone walls and only three rooms. The furnishings are exceptional, and reproductions can be ordered through the museum store. The grounds contain buildings designed for living and producing sugar in the 18th and early 19th centuries, including a cookhouse, a woodworking shop, a bathhouse, an animal mill and windmill and the ruins of the processing plant. Admission is $6 for adults and $1 for children. The plantation is open Monday-Saturday, 10 am-4 pm, November-May, and Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am-3pm, June-October. ☎ 772-0598.

Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge is about three miles from Frederiksted on the peninsula that juts out into the Caribbean at the far southwestern end of the island. Get there from Estate Whim Plantation by turning south (left) onto Route 661 at the point where Route 70 turns north (right) toward Frederiksted. After driving a short distance south, you'll arrive at an intersection of Route 661 and Route 66 (a four-lane paved road to the east). Turn onto the dirt road on your right and drive west for just less than a mile to the refuge gate. Just past the gate, you'll drive along the **Westend Salt Pond** to a dirt road on the left that leads to a parking area. Leave your car in the lot and walk out to the beach that is surrounded on three sides by the Caribbean Sea. Shorebirds and migratory birds feed in this protected area and sea turtles dig nests in the sand to lay their eggs. (See *Wildlife*,

page 15.) Be careful not to disturb a nest since harming or removing turtle eggs is illegal.

The refuge is usually open only on the weekend from sunrise until sunset and it is periodically closed for extended periods to protect nesting birds or turtles. Check the schedule with the St. Croix Environmental Association (☎ 773-1989) or call the refuge office in Christiansted (☎ 773-4554) before you plan a visit.

North of Frederiksted, Route 63 follows the coast past several sandy beaches hidden by profuse vegetation and brings you **Estate Mount Washington Plantation**. Until 1984, no one realized this 1750-era Danish plantation was buried under thick greenery on the far northwest end of the island. Now, the trees have been cut back and the underbrush cleared away to reveal an attractive three-story rum factory, an intriguing dungeon and one of the few water mills on the island. It's interesting to stroll the flower-filled grounds and poke among the vine-covered ruins. A shop on the property displays West Indian antiques and takes custom orders for handcrafted mahogany reproductions. These unmanned plantation ruins are open daily from roughly 9 am-5 pm, but you must make a reservation to visit the antique shop by calling ☎ 772-1026.

About a mile farther north, stop at the isolated beach at **Ham's Bay** to gather shells and wander among the tidal pools. **Scenic Road West** (Route 78), a rugged dirt road that leads east through the forest, can be explored on foot or in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. A lighthouse sits on **Ham's Bluff**, northeast of the bay, and you can hike to it, if you're in good condition. (See *Hiking* for more information about exploring the Scenic Road.)

Driving East & West from Christiansted

Driving west along Route 75 (Northside Road), watch for Route 751, which leads to **Estate Judith Fancy**. This modern-day neighborhood is built on the site of a 1750s Danish plantation, and the ruins of the greathouse and tower remain. Judith herself is said to be buried on the property. Follow Hamilton Drive into the development and turn east onto Caribe Road to see the plantation's ruins. You can drive around and view the attractive homes, then go to the end of Hamilton Drive and look down on **Salt River Bay**, where Columbus anchored on November 14, 1493, during his second voyage. You may wonder if the

Carib Indians were watching from this overlook as Columbus's ships approached the island.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

St. Croix is still divided into land parcels dating from plantation days, and you will notice subdivisions with names such as *Little Princess, La Grand Princess*, *Sweet Bottom* and *Anna's Hope*. Dutch, English and French settlers owned plantations on St. Croix before The Danish West India and Guinea Company bought the island in 1733. After the Danes took control of the island, they allowed people from other countries to buy plantations, and many new purchasers were British. Consequently, whimsical English estate names dominate the island and remain a link to its past.

Get to **Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve** by driving west on Route 75, then north on Route 80. The park was established in 1993 to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery. In addition to being the only known US site that Columbus' crew actually visited, archeologists have found relics of human settlements dating from the second century AD and the park contains the only discovered prehistoric ceremonial ball court in the lesser Antilles. Furthermore, the largest remaining mangrove forest in the US Virgin Islands surrounds this estuary where the Caribbean Sea meets the Salt River, and several endangered species nest here. You don't have to be a biologist or historian to appreciate the multiple significance of the place. Plans are in the works to build a museum and develop interpretive trails through the area, and some may be in place by the time you visit.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Be careful not to disturb ground nests and other habitats when you're exploring the forest.*

Call the **St. Croix Environmental Association** about guided tours of the park and preserve. The cost is $15 for adults and $10 for children under 10. ☎ 773-1989. (See *Hiking* and *Diving* for information about trails and the underwater canyon in the preserve.)

East of Christiansted, Route 75 (East End Road) becomes Route 82 and leads to **Green Cay Marina** (☎ 773-1453; fax 773-9651), where im-

pressive yachts tie up across from the **National Wildlife Reserve** on **Green Cay**. The forest on the small nearby island provides nesting sites for endangered brown pelicans and several species of herons and egrets. The last significant population of the St. Croix ground lizard also lives on the island, so the reserve is closed to visitors, but bird watchers will want to aim their binoculars at the cay for interesting sightings.

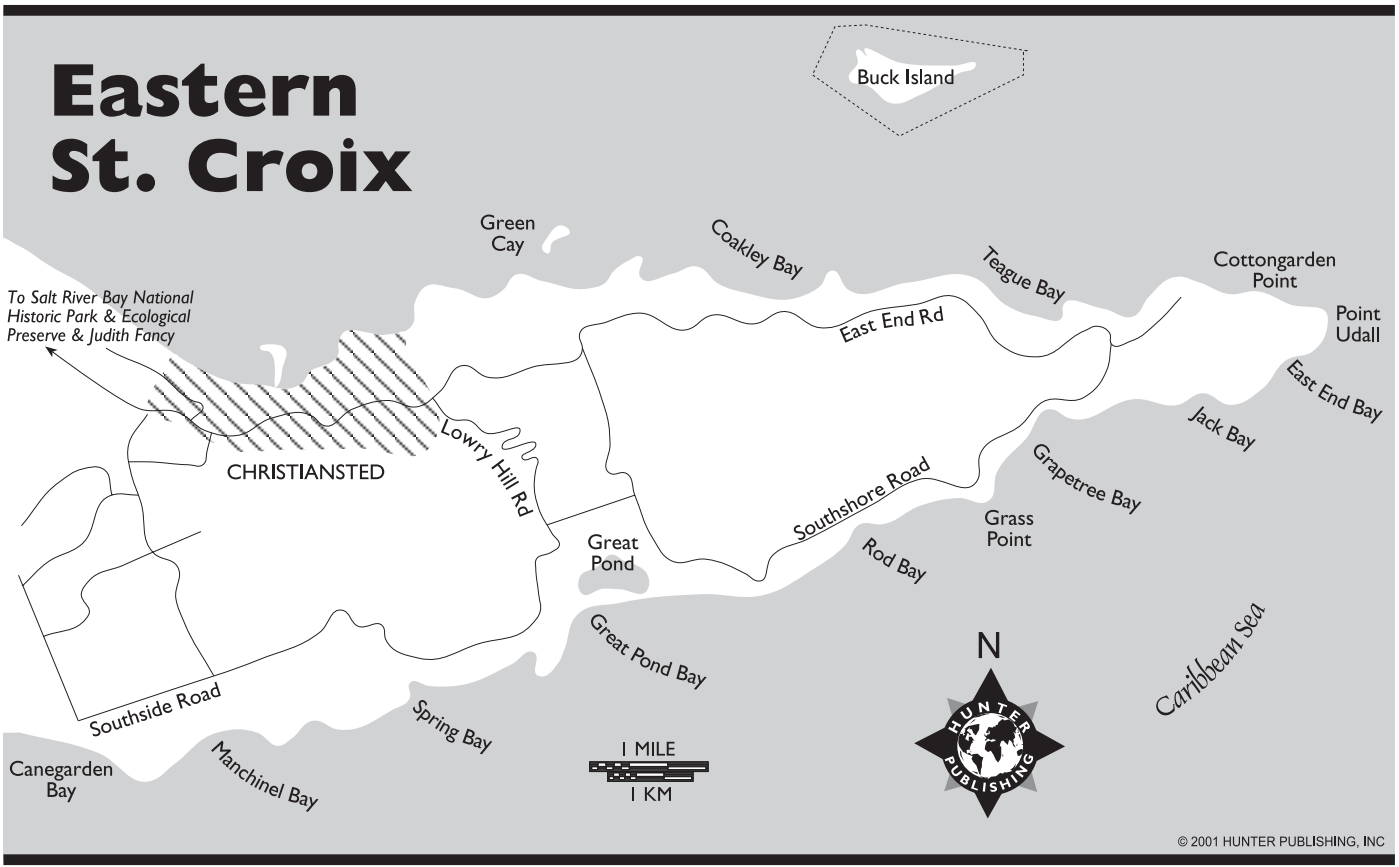
> **INTERESTING FACT:** *The "castle" sitting on a hill about seven miles east of Christiansted is the very private home of Romanian-born heiress Contessa Navarro.*

Continue along Route 82 until it becomes a rough dirt road and ends at **Point Udall**, the easternmost spot in the United States. Many visitors make their way out to the point before dawn to witness the first rays of sun as they touch US land on a new day. Anytime you visit the cliff top, you'll be granted a great view of distant islands and the turquoise Caribbean Sea.

Take Route 60 off Route 82 at Knight Bay to cut across the narrow east end of the island to the south shore. This striking coastline is rolling and grassy, quite different from the north and west shores. **Grass Point** juts out into the sea and provides a captivating view. Many types of birds live and nest in the area, especially around **Great Pond Bay**, and paths lead from the road down to the shore. This is a great place to stretch your legs before taking Route 62 back to Christiansted.

A Day on Buck Island

Buck Island Reef National Monument is a US National Park located off St. Croix's northeast coast 4½ miles from Christiansted's harbor. The island itself is only half a mile wide and a mile long, but the protected area includes 704 acres of water and an extraordinary coral reef system that features the most superb marine garden in the Caribbean. *National Geographic* magazine calls it one of the 10 best beaches in the world, and sunbathers, swimmers, snorkelers and sailors call it paradise.


Eastern
St. Croix
Buck Island
Green
Cay
Coakley Bay
Teague Bay
Cottongarden
Point
Point
Udall
East End Rd
East End Bay
Jack Bay
To Salt River Bay National
Historic Park & Ecological
Preserve & Judith Fancy
CHRISTIANSTED
Lowry Hill Rd
Southshore Road
Grapetree Bay
Grass
Point
Great
Pond
Rod Bay
Great Pond Bay
Caribbean Sea
N
Southside Road
Spring Bay
Canegarden
Bay
Manchinel Bay
1 MILE
1 KM
HUNTER
PUBLISHING
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Dutch named the small island *Pocken-Eyland* because of the *pokholdt* (Lignum vitae) trees that grew profusely there. Over time, people of various nationalities mispronounced the name until it became *Bocken Island*, then *Bock Island,* and, finally, *Buck Island.* In the 1800s, the pokholdt trees were cut to provide lumber and clear the land for pasturing goats. Man over-harvested, the goats over-grazed, and Buck Island's natural vegetation was destroyed.

Over the years, natural disasters added to the destruction, and in 1989, Hurricane Hugo ravaged the island with 14 hours of sustained 150-mph winds and 204-mph gusts. Almost the entire south barrier reef was destroyed, turtle nests were upset, and about 80% of the beach forest was killed. Since then, the reef and foliage has slowly recovered and, under the protection of the National Park Service, it has started to regain much of its natural beauty.

Plan to spend an entire day exploring the island, sunning on the wide sandy beach and snorkeling the underwater nature trail. Several companies operate guided boat trips from Christiansted and Green Cay Marina, and you can rent your own boat from concessioners in town. Almost all provide snorkeling equipment and guided tours give a short lesson before they set you free to explore the marked underwater trail.

Maximum water depth is about 12 feet and visibility is routinely excellent. If you feel unsure about your swimming or snorkeling abilities, go with a guide who will outfit you with an inflatable vest and lead you along the trail. If you take your own boat, check with the National Park Service (☎ 773-1460) about maneuvering through and anchoring in protected waters.

Guided tours usually include a beach picnic, and you can also bring your own lunch or use the grills located at **West Beach** and **Diedrich's Point**. There are tables and pit toilets at both locations. Marked hiking trails begin in each area. You can hike up to an observation point on the island's ridge in 30 to 45 minutes, and walk completely around the shore in about two hours. Be sure to wear shoes (not flip-flops) and carry plenty of water.

ECO-ALERT

At the time of publication, hiking on Buck Island had been curtailed to prevent damage to nesting grounds and the reemerging forest. Check with your tour guide or the National Park Service (☎ 773-1460) about current restrictions.

Hawksbill turtles, green sea turtles, frigate birds, least terns and brown pelicans nest on the island, and several species of tropical birds perch in the trees. The elkhorn coral barrier reef stretches 2,000 yards around two-thirds of the coast and shelters a wide variety of colorful fish, including angels, blue tangs and parrotfish.

Day-Trip Operators

- **Big Beard Adventures** offers full-day trips to Buck Island on *Renegade*, a 42-foot catamaran with a glass bottom. Lunch and rum punch on a secluded St. Croix island is included. Half-day trips are available on the *Buck Island Flyer*, a 40-foot catamaran. Both boats leave from the wharf in Christiansted. ☎ 773-4482.
- ***Diva*** takes only six passengers on a 35-foot Beneteau sailboat, so you feel as though you're out sailing with friends. Call Captain Francis Waters for reservations and information about trips leaving from Christiansted. ☎ 778-4675; e-mail: francis@buckisland-diva.com.
- **Mile Mark Watersports** runs full- and half-day tours in glass-bottom power or sail boats. All trips include snorkeling gear and a guided tour of the reefs, and a box lunch can be ordered at an additional charge. For information or reservations call the office in Christiansted, ☎ 773-2628.
- **Captain Heinz's *Teroro II*** takes passengers to Buck Island from Green Cay Marina aboard the 42-foot trimaran. Call for information on the five-hour and three-and-a-half-hour tours. ☎ 773-3161 or 773-4041.

Adventures on Water

Best Beaches

Splendid white-sand beaches are one of St. Croix's biggest tourist attractions. All are open to the public, but some beachfront hotels may charge a small fee for use of their amenities. Most of the island's beaches have sandy-bottom areas for swimming, and many offer outstanding snorkeling around rocky outcroppings or coral reefs. Some of the island's most stunning beaches are in their natural state; their lack of facilities is offset by their wild beauty.

TURTLE WATCHES

Environmental groups and hotel owners regularly patrol the beaches for signs of turtle nests. They attempt to protect these area or move the eggs to a safe place. If you are lucky enough to see a nest just under the surface of the sand, report its location to the nearest hotel or the St. Croix Environmental Association, ☎ 773-1989. Do not disturb the nest.

While every one of St. Croix's beaches is someone's favorite, the following are listed as a guide to those most often mentioned by residents or frequent visitors as something special.

Cane Bay is probably the best everything-to-everybody beach on the island. Get there by taking Route 80 along the scenic north coast. Look for the beach across from the Cane Bay Plantation. The water can get rough here, and the beach is narrow, but the sand is white and shaded, and the close-in snorkeling and scuba diving is terrific. The renowned Cane Bay Wall drops more than 120 feet less than 150 yards offshore, so divers enter from the beach and swim out to the drop. Snorkelers can see fabulous reef formations and fish near the surface. Restaurants and bars are nearby, and Cane Bay Dive Shop rents snorkeling and scuba equipment.

Davis Bay, just west of Cane Bay at the junction of Route 80 and Route 69, is another long, palm-shaded white-sand beach where swimming is good. The Sunterra Carambola Resort has a restaurant and dive shop right on the beach. Public access is through a pathway from a parking

lot on Route 80, and the guard at the resort's entrance shack will give you directions, if necessary. The water can have rolling surf at times.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Part of the beach is rocky, so enter the sea from the smooth-bottomed west end.*

Protestant Cay is the beach closest to Christiansted, but visitors must take a $4 round-trip ferry ride from the wharf across to the cay. Hotel on the Cay offers watersports, lounge-chair rentals and the services of their restaurant and bar. Beach-bumming, swimming and snorkeling are all great. A steel band plays on the beach each Sunday.

Cramer Park recently underwent a renovation, so restrooms and changing areas are nice. You can bring a picnic and use the tables provided or visit the restaurant nearby. The beach here is popular with locals and can be crowded on weekends. Water is usually calm, offering good swimming conditions. Seagrape trees provide shade. Get there by taking Route 82 east along the north shore, almost to Point Udall, and take a left at the fork in the road near the St. Croix Yacht Club.

Grapetree Bay is home to the new Divi Carina Bay Resort, and the long sugar-white beach is a favorite with snorkelers. Watersports equipment is available for rent and a beachside snack bar provides drinks and light meals. Find the resort and beach by following Route 82 east from Christiansted, then turning right at the fork in the road near the St. Croix Yacht Club and continuing to the south shore.

Isaac Bay and **Jack Bay** have the two most isolated and pristine beaches on the island. You have to hike down from Point Udall at the end of Route 82 by taking a dirt path to East End Bay, then walking back west along a trail that takes you up and over a headland to Isaac Bay. From there you can take a path over the hill on Isaac Point to Jack Bay. You'll rarely have company, and visitors regularly swim and sunbathe in the nude (although it's illegal). The water is calm and snorkeling is terrific along the close-in barrier reef.

Shoy Beach is also secluded, but not nearly as difficult to reach as Isaac/Jack Bay. It's located in an exclusive area known as Estate Shoy (aka Buccaneer Estates), just east of the Buccaneer Resort. Take Route 82 east from Christiansted and turn into the Buccaneer Resort grounds. At the hotel's guard shack, turn right and continue on to another shack, where you'll have to check in with the guard who monitors the upscale neighborhood. He'll direct you to park at the end of the dirt road that runs beside the golf course. Follow a path about 150 yards to

the powdery white-sand beach. Palms provide shade and the water is crystal-clear and calm. Private homes surround the beach. There is no food service or other facilities. Go to the east end of the beach for swimming and the west end for snorkeling.

Buccaneer Beach borders the Buccaneer Resort and, if you're not a guest of the hotel, you'll be charged $4 for use of the lounge chairs, restrooms, and changing facilities. You can rent watersports equipment from the beach center and order lunch from the Mermaid Restaurant. Watch for resort signs on Route 82, two miles east of Christiansted.

Chenay Bay Beach is excellent for swimming, snorkeling and windsurfing. Chenay Bay Beach Resort is located on the beach and allows non-guests to use the lounge chairs if they purchase food or drinks from the snack pavilion. Hammocks, kayaks, snorkel gear, windsurfers and Sunfish may be rented. The beach is three miles east of Christiansted on Route 82.

Reef Beach on Tague Bay off Route 82 is a popular windsurfing spot. Watersports equipment and lounge chairs can be rented, and Duggan's Restaurant is a favorite for lunch. Seagrape trees provide shade for lounging and picnicking.

Sprat Hall Beach is on the west coast, a mile north of Frederiksted on Route 63. The Sprat Hall Plantation Hotel sits on a hill above the beach and charges non-guests a $2 day-use fee. You can rent lounge chairs and have lunch at the Beach Restaurant. Snorkeling is good. The long beach is excellent for leisurely walks.

Rainbow Beach is one of the favorites along a stretch of western coast just north of Frederiksted off Route 63. It is hidden from the road by dense vegetation and has calm water and soft white sand. It's popular with swimmers, snorkelers and beachcombers. A restaurant and bar are nearby.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

The good news and bad news about St. Croix diving and snorkeling is that it is often overlooked. Good news for those who appreciate uncrowded underwater adventures. Bad news for those who miss out on exploring great sites. Good news for the undisturbed reef and those who strive to preserve it. Bad news for dive and tour operators who could use more business.

St. Croix is essentially surrounded by an extensive, well-developed barrier reef and has the largest living reef of any Caribbean island. In an attempt to protect the reef from anchor damage, a non-profit organization called The **Island Conservation Effort** oversees 22 moored dive sites along the coast. Conscientious dive operators regularly anchor at more than 20 additional prominent sites, and seasoned divers claim the island actually offers hundreds of excellent scuba locations. Moreover, a portion of the coral reef that encircles **Buck Island National Park** is maintained as a marked underwater trail for snorkelers.

A vibrant **wall** runs the length of the northern coast and begins near the shore in about 30 feet of water. This allows novice divers and snorkelers to see plenty of spectacular formations and marine life. Since the wall plummets to more than 13,000 feet, experienced divers enjoy the thrill of descending down one of the steepest drops in the world. Many of the best sites are accessible from the beach, and many more can be reached by a short boat ride.

While you certainly must go to **Buck Island,** the reef and underwater trail have become a bit haggard due to storm damage and the constant assault of adoring visitors. Ordinarily, Mother Nature would have healed the reef's hurricane wounds quickly, but careless and uninformed snorkelers kick, touch and stand on new growth so that it is destroyed as quickly as it forms. Nonetheless, the tiny island and its underwater treasures are unique and captivating, so go, follow the markers along the ocean floor, swim with the parrotfish, feed the grouper and please, please don't stand on anything except sand.

Scuba divers have an abundant choice of excellent dive sites, including the **Frederiksted Pier**. For years, the sponges and corals that developed on the support pillars of the town's dock created a diver's paradise. Then, in 1989, Hurricane Hugo raged across the island and wrecked Frederiksted's harbor, including the pier. A new pier was inaugurated in 1994, and the pilings of the old pier were dumped in Butler Bay beside some sunken ships.

The new pier has some interesting fresh growth on its support columns, and many claim this is the best night dive in the Caribbean. Divers routinely spot seahorses, lobster and eels among the colorful sponges. If you don't go with a dive operator, check with the Harbor Master at the pier before you enter the water. (Be prepared to show your certification card.)

At the western end of the north-shore reef is **Northstar**, one of the steepest walls in the world. You can swim out to the drop by entering from the beach at Davis Bay, but most divers find it easier go out by boat, since there is often a moderate current and the area has a lot of rocks. Expect to see an amazing wall with plunging shafts full of staghorn and brain corals, tube sponges and sea fans. Many types of tropical fish, turtles and eels live along the reef.

East of Northstar, you'll find a couple of different dive sites at **Salt River**. Dolphins and sharks often hang out along the east and west walls that border the 300-foot **Salt River Canyon**. The east wall features **Russ Rock** and **Barracuda Bank**, which are loaded with corals and sponges. Look for black and gorgonian coral, barracuda and stingrays. The west wall is covered with brilliant purple sponges and has little swim-through canyons along its slope. Like the east wall, it hosts an extraordinary variety of marine life.

Long Reef offers a shallow dive (50 to 80 feet) and an abundance of brilliantly colored fish. As you gradually descend along the reef and a series of shallow caves, watch for turtles, octopi, lobsters and rays. If you see a shark, it's most likely an agreeable nurse shark, so admire it and move on. The elkhorn corals are fantastic.

Four wrecks are sunk in **Butler Bay** off the western coast. While the wrecks themselves are nothing special, they do make a remarkable artificial reef. The 170-foot container ship named *Rosa Maria,* sank when her crew unloaded her heavy cargo from only one side and flipped her over. She was towed out to Butler Bay and sunk in 100 feet of water. South of *Rosa Maria* are the 140-foot fishing boat, *Suffolk Maid*, a 60-foot tug boat, *Northwind*, and a 300-foot barge, *Virgin Island.* These three wrecks are in more shallow water and make ideal second dives after the *Rosa Maria.*

Dive Operators

The following dive shops on St. Croix offer first-class PADI instruction, multi-level certification, guided dive trips and equipment rental. Most operators schedule two boat trips daily and arrange instruction courses to meet your vacation plans.

Expect to pay $55 for a one-tank dive, $75 for a two-tank dive, about $70 - $80 for an introductory resort-course dive that requires no experience, and around $350 for a certification course.

NOTE: *The area code for all the US Virgin Islands is 340.*

St. Croix Ultimate Bluewater Adventures is a PADI Gold Palm operator and has been rated one of the best dive shops in the Caribbean by readers of *Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine.* Several factors figure into their popularity. The staff is super-friendly, the shop is well stocked and conveniently located just steps from Christiansted Harbor, and the dive boat is outfitted with lots of creature comforts and never goes out overcrowded. For a real treat, book a night dive, which leaves early enough to watch the sunset. Owners Ed and Molly Buckley oversee a truly first-class operation, and all the instructors and dive masters strive to make your diving experience the highlight of your vacation. Look for the "SCUBA" sign above the shop's entrance next to the St. Croix Aquarium at 14 Caravelle Arcade in Christiansted. ☎ 877-567-1367 or 773-5994; fax 773-5910; www.stcroixscuba.com; e-mail stcroixscuba@worldnet.att.net.

Cane Bay Dive Shop is on the north shore across from the renowned Wall. Their one- , two- and six-tank beach-dive packages include visits to several sites along the drop-off within easy reach of the shore. The one- and two-tank boat dives are tailored to meet the skills, interests and schedules of their divers. Non-divers often tag along to snorkel above their scuba-certified friends, and all levels of instruction are available, including resort course. Find this five-star PADI facility on Route 80 (North Shore Road) at Cane Bay. A second shop is near the cruise-ship pier in Frederiksted. Customers can request complimentary shuttle service from their hotel. ☎ 800-338-3843 or 773-9913; fax 778-5442; www.ecani.com; e-mail canebay@viaccess.net.

Dive Experience is a five-star PADI facility owned by Michelle Pugh, an amazing diver and underwater photographer with over 30 years experience. She oversees a friendly, professional staff that enjoys showing off their favorite dive sites. Every afternoon the shop runs a one-tank Fish Feed Dive that allows participants to get familiar with moray eels, barracudas and other congenial critters. Additional dives are scheduled to sites along the walls and canyons of the coral reefs. The shop is at 40 Strand Street in Christiansted. ☎ 800-235-9047 or 773-3307; www.st-croix.com/diveexperience; e-mail divexp@viaccess.net.

Anchor Dive Center is a PADI five-star facility located five- to 15-minutes by boat from dive sites in the Salt River National Park and Ecological Preserve. Because of their extensive experience in the park area, the staff has discovered many secluded spots that they enjoy sharing with visitors. Instructors take one to six divers per boat to sites within the park and elsewhere around the island. Find the dive center

at the Salt River Marina. A second shop is located at the wharf in Christiansted. ☎ 800-532-3483 or 778-1522; e-mail anchordivecenter@juno.com.

V.I.Divers is now part of **St. Croix Ocean Recreational Experiences (SCORE)**, which specializes in diving and fishing trips for small groups. Captain Dave Burkhart heads up a dedicated and profession staff focused on providing a top-quality experience, from introductory dives to certification courses. Moreover, this is the only operator on the island that dives the large coral formations and caverns off the south shore. Visit the well-stocked shop at 1112 Strand Street in Christiansted. ☎ 877-773-6045 or 773-6045; fax 778-4338; www.scorevi.com; e-mail score@viaccess.net.

Dive St. Croix, located at the Carambola Resort on Davis Bay, caters to guests of the hotel, but is an excellent choice for divers looking for a beach-entrance dive. They rent equipment, give advanced training courses and conduct guided tours for certified divers. Non-divers can take part in introduction classes or take a full certification courses. Contact the shop by calling the resort at ☎ 888-503-8750 or 778-3800.

Scuba West, run by Captain Dick, specializes in guided day or night dives from the Frederiksted pier. You may want to try one of each to compare the differences. In addition, the captain leads boat dives in the calm waters off the west end and at the wall in Cane Bay. This full-service PADI center offers all types of certification programs and advanced training. Non-divers are invited to join the fun by snorkeling above the underwater sites. The shop is at 330 Strand Street in Frederiksted. ☎ 800-352-0107 or 772-3701; fax 772-1852.

Boating & Sailing

Annapolis International Sailing School is based in Christiansted within easy walking distance of hotels and restaurants. Skilled instructors with excellent communication techniques teach year-round using boats chosen for their comfort and performance. You can sign up to become a sailor during the weekend course, schedule a seven-day cruise through the Virgin Islands or hone your skills on a new-sailor's mini-holiday. Contact the school at 31-E King Cross Street in Christiansted. ☎ 773-4709; http://usboat.com; e-mail jones@viaccess.net.

Scheduled Cruises

Buck Island is by far the most popular day-trip by boat. Only a few companies are licensed to take visitors to the national park, so boats are often booked full during high season or when cruise ships are docked in town. Make your reservation early. If you want the option of snorkeling and picnicking at more isolated spots or prefer a sunset sail along the coast, you'll have several choices of scheduled cruises and custom-designed trips.

WILDLIFE WATCH: From February through April, you are likely to spot humpback whales in the waters around St. Croix.

Call a few operators before you book to ask how many passengers the boat is licensed to carry and how many are expected at the time you want to go. Also, find out how long you have at each stop, and if snorkeling equipment and refreshments are included.

Rates for a full-day excursion with lunch run about $65 for adults and $45 for kids. Prices for half-day and sunset sails vary widely depending on the types of refreshments served and the length of the trip, so shop around before you make a reservation. The operators listed below have a reputation for excellence.

Big Beard's Adventure Tours offers visitors a choice of full-day or half-day sailing trips from Christiansted to Buck Island. The full-day excursion aboard *Renegade*, a 42-foot glass-bottom catamaran, is the most popular choice. It includes snorkeling equipment, a guided snorkeling tour along the underwater trail and an all-you-can-eat cookout with limitless rum punches on a secluded beach. *Renegade* also goes out each evening for a sunset sail. A half-day sail aboard the 40-foot *Buck Island Flyer* leaves at noon and doesn't include lunch. Both boats are available for private charters. *Big Beard* himself (aka John Macy) is an ordained minister and performs weddings dressed in his white captain's uniform. Look for the bearded captain and his two catamarans on the wharf in Christiansted. ☎ 773-4482.

DIVA is a 35-foot Beneteau sailboat captained by Francis Waters. No more than six passengers take each of the personalized tours, so you feel as though you're an invited guest on a private yacht. Contact Captain Francis for information about charters and scheduled excursions. ☎ 778-4675; e-mail francis@buckisland-diva.com.

Teroro II is a 42-foot trimaran operated by captains Carl and Heinz from Green Cay Marina. They have many years of sailing experience and are excellent snorkeling guides. Consider renting the underwater

camera and taking pictures of your group as they snorkel the trail at Buck Island. ☎ 773-3161 or 773-4041.

Mile Mark Watersports runs full- and half-day tours in glass-bottom, power- or sailboats. The boats carry from six to 49 passengers and, in addition to Buck Island trips, excursions can be customized. The sunset sail, which cruises along St. Croix's north coast, includes snacks and rum punch. Contact the office at 59 King's Wharf in Christiansted for information and reservations. ☎ 800-523-DIVE or 773-2628; fax 773-7400; e-mail dive-stcroix@worldnet.att.net.

Belinda Charters sails a 36-foot sloop from Green Cay Marina to secluded reefs for snorkeling. The day trip leaves at 10amand includes a buffet lunch. The sunset cruise departs at 4:30 pm and includes hors d'oeuvres and rum punch. Captains Bill and Linda Lawhon take only six passengers per sailing to ensure personal attention for every guest. Contact them at the marina for information on two- and three-hour sail-and-snorkel outings. ☎ 773-1641; e-mail bilinda@viaccess.net.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Contact the St. Croix Yacht Club at Teague Bay for information on regattas held on the island. ☎ 773-9531.*

Fishing

Since the world famous six-mile-deep **North Drop** extends from Puerto Rico to the waters around St. Croix, sportfishing is popular with many visitors. At least 20 world records have been set here, and fishermen often land blue marlin, sailfish, kingfish, wahoo and yellowfin tuna. The following captains welcome guests aboard their boats for full- and half-day charters.

Expect to pay around $500-$600 per boat for a full-day trip and half that amount for a half-day excursion. Bait and tackle usually are included, and snacks may be offered, but don't expect a catered buffet lunch. On occasion, the captain will cook the catch for a chartered party.

Captain Pete's Sportfishing offers a no-fish-next-trip-free deal that will appeal to most fishermen. He runs full- and half-day charters on his 25-foot *Louie G* from St. Croix Marina in Gallows Bay. ☎ 773-1123.

Fantasy, a 38-foot Bertram Special captained by Bill Schmidt, leaves St. Croix Marina in Gallows Bay on fishing excursions lasting four, six

or eight hours. Captain Bill will provide table service of the catch for charter parties. ☎ 773-0917.

Fishaholic Services is serious about sportfishing. They have two boats that leave from different marinas and offer trips lasting four, six or eight hours. *Leisure Lady*, a 41-foot boat, is docked at Green Cay Marina. *Fishaholic*, a 31-foot boat, is docked at Salt River Marina. Make reservations for either boat by calling ☎ 719-9208.

Lisa Ann, owned by Captain Bill Griffin, is a 44-foot sportfishing boat that operates out of Green Cay Marina. Talk to the captain at ☎ 773-3712.

Mocko Jumbie is a 36-foot Hatteras with a full tower, owned by Captain Harold Price. Three trip packages are available, and Penn International tackle is provided on the no-nonsense expeditions. ☎ 771-6244.

SCORE (St. Croix Ocean Recreational Experience) specializes in separate or combination fishing/diving trips aboard *Tarponshark and Tarponshark II*. Captain Dave Burkhart is in charge, and his charters include tackle, bait, drinks and snacks. Call him to discuss fishing or fishing/diving excursions. ☎ 778-8907 or 513-3613.

Lisa is a 34-foot trawler that can be chartered by the hour for fishing, cruising or partying. Make arrangements by calling ☎ 713-9084 or 513-9387.

MARINA UPDATES

Contact the following marinas for updated information about charter operators and private boats for rent: **St. Croix Marina** at Gallows Bay, ☎ 773-0298; **Salt River Marina**, ☎ 778-9650; **Green Cay Marina**, ☎ 773-1453.

Kayaking

Caribbean Adventure Tours leads three-hour kayak expeditions through the historic Salt River National Park and Ecological Preserve and along the north shore. This is an ideal way to explore the hidden inlets and scout for wildlife among the mangroves. The trip includes time to hike and swim on a secluded beach and paddle to the spot where Columbus came ashore in 1493. ☎ 773-4599; e-mail andycroix@worldnet.att.net.

Kayaks can be rented at **Salt River National Park** and on the beach at **Cane Bay** for $15 per hour. In addition, several waterfront resorts provide complimentary kayaks for guests and rent to others. Two to check with are **Tamarind Reef Hotel**, on Route 82 across from Green Cay (☎ 773-4455), and the watersports center at **Hotel on the Cay**, on Protestant Cay across from the Christiansted wharf (☎ 773-7060).

Surfing, Windsurfing, Parasailing & Other Watersports

Vacationers who enjoy all types of water fun and like a challenge will want to head to **Protestant Cay** in Christiansted Harbor. **Trade Windsurfing** (☎ 773-7060), in the watersports center at Hotel on the Cay, offers lessons with certified instructors. Windsurfing boards are available for rent by the hour or day.

Parasailing over Christiansted Harbor is an exhilarating and breath-takingly beautiful adventure. On a good day, you may spot a giant sea turtle below. **Paradise Parasailing** (☎ 773-7060) on Protestant Cay will give you an excellent ride.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Be sure to take your camera up with you for fabulous eagle-eye photos. Since you take off and land on the boat's platform, you won't get a drop of water on yourself or your camera.*

St. Croix Watersports on Protestant Cay rents all types of watersports equipment, including Sea-Doos, Waverunners and snorkeling items.They also offer stay-dry underwater tours in the semi-submersible ***Oceanique***. Along with **Paradise Parasailing** and **Trade Windsurfing,** the center offers visitors virtually every type of water adventure. One phone number will connect you to all the watersports shops: ☎ 773-7060.

■ Adventures on Foot

Hiking

Some parts of St. Croix simply must be seen on foot. You can't fully enjoy the beauty of the rain forest, Salt River Bay Na-

tional Historic Park or the bays below Point Udall unless you walk the rugged paths that lead to the most remote and stunning sites.

A nonprofit group called **St. Croix Environmental Association** (SEA) schedules guided hikes through some of the island's ecologically significant areas from December through March. Most treks take about two hours and run $20 for adults and $12 for children 12 and under. During low season, the group gives lectures and slide shows that are open to the public but may require an admission fee. Check with the office for a schedule of events in the Arawak Building, Suite 3, Gallows Bay. ☎ 773-1989; fax 773-7545.

Caribbean Adventure Tours also offers hikes into the rain forest, down to secluded east end bays and to other remote areas. This is a good chance to take in an abundance of information on vegetation, wildlife, history and ecology while covering a lot of ground in a few hours. Prices and hiking time vary, so contact the office for details. ☎ 773-4599; e-mail andycroix@worldnet.att.net.

Olasee Davis is a native of St. Thomas, a specialist in the natural resources department at the University of the Virgin Island, and one of St. Croix's best-kept secrets. He leads group hikes on Sundays and holidays through the rain forest and to off-the-tourist-track destinations in the hills and along the coast. His flexible itinerary changes, but two-hour hikes usually cost $15 per person. Contact him at ☎ 778-9491 or 772-0325.

Rain Forest Treks

If you want to strike out on your own, try the dirt roads and paths off **Route 76** that lead through the **Caledonia rain forest** in the northwest section of the island. No organization or governmental department maintains marked trails here, but several routes are suggested below, and it's easy to find your own interesting off-road paths on this mostly-rural island. Be sure to ask permission if you want to trek across private property.

St. Croix's **rain forest** is actually a tropical woodland because it gets too little precipitation to be the genuine thing. However, it's close enough to be an excellent place for hiking. You can drive this route in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, but you'll enjoy it more if you explore on foot.

Take Route 63 north from Frederiksted along the west coast to Creque (say *creeky)* Dam Road (Route 58), a narrow recently paved lane that runs east from Sprat Hall Estate. Park and continue on Creque Dam Road until you reach the 150-foot dam, a distance of about a mile. You

can turn around here and return to your car, or continue through the forest of terpentine and mahogany trees to open fields that allow you good views. Eventually, Creque Dam Road intersects Route 763, which is sometimes called the Western Scenic Road. This is another ideal turnaround point, and you will have about a three-mile hike back to your car. If you continue south on 763, you'll reach Mahogany Road (Route 76) near St. Croix Leap woodworking shop (see page 197).

Route 78, known as **Scenic Road**, meanders through the forest north of Creque Dam Road. Park your car at the end of Route 63 where concrete pillars mark the beginning of Scenic Road. Walk along the dirt road as it ascends gently into the forest. After about a mile, you'll come to a panoramic view of the countryside below. In another 1½ miles you'll come to a gate across a path to your left that leads down a steep hill to the ruins of a sugar mill. Additional trails from the mill lead down to isolated beaches on **Annaly Bay**.

Two picturesque hikes begin at the intersection of Scenic Route 78 and Route 69, which is known as **The Beast** because bikers must tackle this monster hill during the annual Beast of the Americas Paradise Triathlon. Notice the enormous cartoon-like paw prints painted at the bottom of the steep grade near the junction of Route 80 as a year-long memento of the triathlon.

The first hike goes west on Route 78 from Route 69 and passes below Carambola Golf Course with excellent views to the south. The second hike heads east on Route 78 from Route 69 and goes up and down hills past lush foliage. You'll have occasional views across the countryside as you walk toward Mount Eagle, the island's highest point at 1,165 feet, and Blue Mountain, which is 1,096 feet high. Turn around after 1½ miles, just as you reach the paved road that leads to private homes.

Salt River is historically significant because it is the only documented landing of a Columbus expedition on territory now owned by the United States. Ecologically, the area is important because of its mangrove thicket which provides a habitat for baby fish as well as endangered and migrating birds. You can explore the park and preserve by parking in the paved lot on the west side of the bay on Route 801 off Route 80 and walking north along the beach to the tidal pools.

Another possibility is to leave your car at the end of Route 751 off Route 75 in the neighborhood called **Judith Fancy**. Look for a trail leading up to an old dirt road that goes to the east side of the bay. This area is known as Cabo de las Flechas, or Cape of the Arrows, because of the conflict between Columbus' men and Carib Indians when the Europe-

ans came ashore looking for water in 1493. The multicolored rocks along this section of coast are called Easter Rocks. The mangroves are best explored by kayak, but you can muck around in the drier sections, if you don't mind getting muddy.

Tennis

St. Croix has three lighted public tennis courts at **DC Canegata Ballpark** on East End Road (Route 75) at the intersection of Spring Gut Road (Route 85) on the east side of Christiansted. Call ☎ 773-3850. One public court is located near **Fort Frederik** in Frederiksted (call the Frederiksted Tourist Bureau for information, ☎ 772-0357).

Several resorts provide complimentary use of courts to guests and allow non-guests to play for a fee. The **Buccaneer Hotel** charges $8 per person per hour for non-guest use of eight courts. Two courts are lighted for night play, and tennis pro Don de Wilde is available for lessons. If you don't have a partner, the pro shop can set up a game for you. Advance reservations are required. ☎ 773-2100, extension 736.

Chenay Bay Beach Resort has two courts and charges $5 per person per hour for play by those not registered at the hotel. For reservations, ☎ 773-2918. **Tamarind Reef Hotel** features two lighted Cal Grass courts. Non-guests may play for $8 per person per hour by reserving at ☎ 773-4455. **The Reef** offers two courts for non-guest play at $5 per person per hour. Make reservations at ☎ 773-8844.

Golf

St. Croix offers spectacular golf. Concierges on other islands often arrange for golfer-guests to fly here for the day to enjoy the excellent courses and striking views.

Carambola Golf Course was designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., who considered it one of his top achievements. Many believe it to be the most beautiful course in the world. It's made up of 18 well-groomed holes laid out in a garden-like setting with hilltop vistas. Golf pro Greg McCulloch oversees the par three course. The non-guest greens fee is $50 for 18 holes and $29 for nine holes, including a mandatory cart. Twilight rates go down to $35 for 18 holes, including cart; club rental is $17. The course is on Route 69, above Sunterra Carambola Beach Resort. Consider stopping by the restaurant for lunch and views, even if you're not playing golf. Call in advance for a tee time. ☎ 778-5638.

The Buccaneer has a sprawling 18-hole course with lovely ocean views. Play is near the water in several spots and the fairways roll over gentle hills. Tim Johnson is the pro in charge; lessons are available by appointment. Non-guests can play 18 holes for $30, a cart charge of $15 and club rental of $20. The greens fee for nine holes is $19, cart rental is $10 and clubs are $12. The course is on the Buccaneer grounds off Route 82 at Gallows Bay. ☎ 773-2100 extension 738.

The Reef has a 3,100-yard nine-hole executive course and driving range. Many say this course is a real challenge and a lot of fun. Green fees are $10 for nine holes and $18 if you play a double round. Carts are available for nine holes at $7 per person and for 18 holes at $12 per person. Stop by on Friday afternoons for the weekly scramble. The course is across from Tague Bay on Route 82 at the east end of the island. ☎ 773-8844.

Adventures on Horseback

Seeing the rain forest or coastline from atop a horse will give you a whole different view of St. Croix. Two outfitters give guided rides, and if you enjoy horseback riding, you should book a trip with both.

Kerry's North Shore Horseback Rides is run by Kerry Hartman. He can be found near Off the Wall, a beach bar on Route 80 at Cane Bay. Kerry will match you with a horse according to your riding skills, then guide you along the beach and up into the hills for incredible views. Ask about his all-day trip to The Baths, a boulder-strewn area near Carambola Beach Resort that is rarely visited by tourists. Two-hour rides run about $40. Make reservations at ☎ 778-8510.

Paul and Jill's Equestrian Stables will arrange a ride through the rain forest near Frederiksted. The stable is owned by Paul Wojcie and Jill Hurd, who know where to find plantation ruins and panoramic overlooks concealed in the forest. Bring your camera. Jill and Paul have a large number of horses trained to carry beginners as well as experienced riders, and novices will be taught basic skills during the ride. In high season, rides go out at 10:30 am and 4:30 pm. In the summer, there's only one trip that goes out at 5 pm. Find the stables near Sprat Hall on Creque Dam Road (Route 58) off Route 63 north of Frederiksted. Two-hour rides cost about $50 and reservations should be made a day in advance by calling ☎ 772-2880 or 772-2627.

Adventures on Wheels

St. Croix is an excellent island to explore by bike. You don't have to be an experienced rider to give it a try; many roads have light traffic and beaches offer wide-open space for cruising. Hardy riders may want to tackle the rugged, hilly tracks in the rain forest. (See *Hiking* for trail suggestions.)

Mountain Biking

St. Croix Bike and Tours rents 21-speed KHS mountain bikes by the hour and has good weekly rates. They even deliver to your hotel. In addition, owner Mike McQuerton offers well-planned excursions with knowledgeable guides who fill you in on the history, culture, architecture and horticulture of the island as you ride. One of the most popular tours is through historic Frederiksted and up the narrow coast road to Ham's Bluff. Come by the shop on Strand Square, next to the police station, in Frederiksted or call for information and reservations. ☎ 772-2343; fax 772-1351; e-mail mcqueston@islands.vi.

Adventures in the Air

Simply getting to St. Croix is quite an adventure if you arrive by seaplane. **Seaborne Seaplane Adventures** comes in low over the water and touches down in Christiansted Harbor right next to the yachts and people strolling along the boardwalk. They also offer a "Passport to Adventure" flightseeing tour of the Virgin Islands. Call the office for seasonal schedules, rates and reservations. ☎ 888-359-8687 or 777-4491 or 773-6442; e-mail SeaborneAssist@hotmail.com.

At **Classic Biplane Rides** the airplane is as unique as the flight. The new handcrafted plane is a modern version of the open-cockpit 1935 WACO YMF-5. It carries three people, so the pilot flies from the back seat and two passengers sit side-by-side up front. Before climbing into the bright red classic beauty, you'll be briefed and equipped with a leather aviator helmet. Call Biplane Bob at ☎ 690-7433.

Shopping

Duty-free shopping in St. Croix is not on the same big scale as St. Thomas, and Christiansted's selection and variety aren't nearly as great as Charlotte Amalie's. In order to compete, shop owners have turned to artists for their creative talent, offering one-of-a-kind items. While most of the best shops are found in Christiansted, a few are in Frederiksted, and fewer still are located in museums, hotels or shopping centers scattered around the island.

SHOPPING HOURS

Unless noted otherwise, stores are open 10 am-5 pm, Monday-Saturday. Shops may stay open later during high season or when a cruise ship is in port, and may close entirely during the off season.

Christiansted

The main shopping area in Christiansted is made up of charming narrow passageways running parallel between Boardwalk, on the waterfront, and Strand Street. The entire flower-filled, vine-covered area can be scouted on foot in a couple of hours. Serious shoppers will want to linger longer. Look for **Pan Am Pavillion**, **Caravelle Arcade** and **King's Alley**. Other worthwhile stores can be found past Strand Street on King, Company and Queen Streets.

Chic boutiques are tucked into quaint old Danish buildings made of cut coral or old-world bricks held together with molasses mortar. Some of the most expensive high-quality items may be hidden in hole-in-the-wall boutiques. Many businesses are owned and operated by the talented craftsmen or artists that create all the merchandise, and you may be able to watch them at work.

THE BEAUTY OF NO DUTY

Remember, you can bring back $1,200 of goods per person duty-free from the tax-free US Virgin Islands. All goods made on the islands are exempt from duty and don't count toward the $1,200 allowance. Adults over 21 years of age can bring back five bottles of liquor and a sixth, if one is locally produced in the US Virgin Islands.

Jewelry is a big seller throughout the Caribbean, and three excellent Christiansted stores stand out from the others. At **Crucian Gold** (☎ 773-5241), islander Brian Bishop crafts distinctive pieces, including popular knot-button-latch bracelets, Crucian Mill pendants and Turk's Head rings. He's self-taught and you can watch him work at his shop on Boardwalk at King's Wharf. ☎ 773-5241.

Waterfront Larimar brings the exclusive blue larimar gemstone from its source on a remote Caribbean mountaintop to Christiansted, where it is set in locally crafted sterling silver and 14K gold pieces. Stop by the store at Boardwalk and King's Alley to see this rare stone. ☎ 877-527-4627 or 692-9000; www.CaribbeanJewelryStore.com.

Sonya's is world-famous, and you'll probably hear the name mentioned in any conversation about jewelry or shopping on St. Croix. Sonya Hough has been making exquisite jewelry for 30 years and she originated the popular "Crucian hook" bracelet. According to local tradition, if the C-shaped clasp is worn with the opening facing toward your heart, you're in a committed relationship. If the C faces away from your heart, you're available. Stop by to see Sonya's elegant new signature bracelet. The shop is on the southwest corner of Company and Church Streets. ☎ 778-8605.

The best place to shop for perfume and cosmetics is at the well-stocked **Violette Boutique**. Pick up cosmetics by makers such as Borghese, Lancôme and Clarins, or fragrances from Lalique, Givenchy and Estée Lauder. In addition, you can browse through a fine selection of Mont Blanc pens, Fendi handbags and Gucci watches. Violette is located in the Caravelle Arcade at 38 Strand Street. ☎ 800-544-5912 or 773-2148; fax 773-6910; www.violetteboutique.com; e-mail vboutique@aol.com.

For local arts and crafts, try Memories of St. Croix and Many Hands. Both feature a good selection. **Memories** is a non-profit co-op and claims that 95% of their merchandise is priced at less than $100. You'll be pleased to find unique originals in many mediums, including glass, porcelain, wicker and coral. The shop is open from 7 am-5 pm, Monday-Saturday. It's across the street from Sonya's at the corner of Church and Company Streets. ☎ 713-8444.

Many Hands has been around for 30 years and specializes in original art and prints by a variety of local artists. In addition, the store carries historic maps, island spices, handmade dolls and a large selection of Christmas ornaments. The shop is located at 21 Pan Am Pavilion. ☎ 773-1990; www.manyhandsusvi.com; e-mail manyhands@viaccess.net.

Art and craft items from around the Caribbean can be found at **Folk Art Trader.** Patty and Charles Eitzen travel throughout the region to find baskets, masks, pottery, jewelry and original paintings for their unique shop. Everything is high quality and captivating at this emporium on the east corner of Strand and Queen Cross Streets. ☎ 773-1900.

The Royal Poinciana is a unique gift shop. You'll think you've entered an old-time drug-and-department store when you see the assortment of Caribbean teas, herbs, spices, soaps, lotions, candles and decorative household items. Don't be overwhelmed. Simply browse for a few minutes, and don't be surprised if you find something you really must have. If you buy something cumbersome, the store will pack and ship it home for you. Look for this enchanting store at 1111 Strand Street. ☎ 773-9892.

Purple Papaya is a relative newcomer to the gift-shop scene, so they try hard to be almost everything to almost everyone. If you're stuck for a gift or souvenir idea, consider a T-shirt or embroidered dress. Located in the Pan Am Pavillion at Strand and Queen Cross Streets. ☎ 713-9412.

Several stores in Christiansted specialize in clothing. If you want white, white, white, or maybe beige, head for **The White House** at 8B Kings Alley Walk. ☎ 773-9222. (**The Black Market** may be open by the time you read this.) For hip-hop urban *stylz*, try **Urban Threadz/ Tribal Threadz** at 52C Company Street. ☎ 773-2883. **Urban Kidz** is down the street.

Frederiksted

Check out **Strand Square** across from the pier in historic Frederiksted. **Tropical Memories** sits in a lovely courtyard and features a selection of souvenir items such as Crucian art and crafts from various Caribbean islands. The store is at 217 Strand. ☎ 772-0940; www.tropicalmemories.com. **Island We Be** specializes in island spices and confections, craft items made from plants that grow in the rain forest and art works by owner Joffre George. Kids like to take home a mocko jumbie doll to remind them of the real entertainers they saw on the island. Visit at 2 Strand Street. ☎ 772-2555.

Yemaya's has a selection of colorful 100% hand-dyed silks. The shop is in the courtyard at Strand Square. ☎ 772-2111. **Sunny Daze** is the

place for men's and women's clothing as well as coffees and teas from the island. It's on the corner of Strand and Market Streets. ☎ 772-0220.

Around the Island

St. Croix Leap is a hands-on trade school and workshop for those who make fine products from island woods. The St. Croix Life and Environmental Arts Project sponsors the effort, which stresses conservation and self-development. You can order custom-made pieces or select from finished projects such as tables, trays, vases, clocks and frames. The open-air shop is located in the rain forest two miles east of Frederiksted on Route 76 (Mahogany Road) and is open daily from 9 am until 5:30 pm. ☎ 772-0421.

Whim Museum Gift Shop features stunning mahogany furniture reproduced from originals by Baker Furniture. In addition, you can pick up cards, jewelry, maps and books. (An associate gift shop may have opened in downtown Christiansted by the time you read this book. Ask when you visit or call the Plantation gift shop.) Visit the store at the Whim Plantation on Route 70 (Centerline Road) two miles east of Frederiksted. ☎ 772-0598.

Kmart is an unusual entry for a guidebook, but it is the best place to stock up on inexpensive liquor. If you have a car, stop in and buy six bottles of Cruzan Rum for each adult in your group. Carrying boxes are available at the check-out counter. You also may want to get an extra roll of film or a tube of sunscreen. Stores are located at Sunshine Mall on Route 70 (Centerline Road) just east of Frederiksted, ☎ 692-5848, and at Sunny Isles on Route 70 (Centerline Road) southwest of Christiansted, ☎ 719-9190.

■ Where to Stay

One of St. Croix's many distinctive charms is the selection of excellent small hotels in addition to several splendid resorts. Former plantations, waterfront inns, secluded condos and private homes round out the list of overnight accommodations. If you stay in Christiansted, you'll be near shops, restaurants, daytime activities and after-dark entertainment. Frederiksted properties are quieter and the rain forest is nearby.

Remember, the area code for St. Croix is 340.

Rental Agencies

If you're interested in renting a condo, villa or house, contact one of the following management companies:

- **Rent-A-Villa**, 26157 Gallows Bay, St. Croix, USVI 00824. ☎ 800-533-6863 or 778-0361; fax 778-0361; www.st-croix.com/rentavilla/.
- **Island Villas**, 6 Company Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-626-4512 or 773-8821; fax 773-8823.
- **CPMI**, ☎ 800-496-7379 or 778-8782; fax 773-2150.
- **Richards & Ayer**, PO Box 754, Frederikste**d,** St. Croix, USVI 00841, ☎ 772-0420; fax 772-2958.
- **Caribbean Villas on the Web**, www.cvillas.com; e-mail info@cvillas.com.
- **Caribbean Destinations,** ☎ 800-888-0897; fax 504-834-7023; www.caribbeandest.com; e-mail island@caribbeandest.com.

The accommodations listed below are considered among the best on the island judged by location, price and facilities. Rates reflect the cost of a standard double room for two people in high season. During low-season, generally from April 15 through December 14, rates drop 25-50%. Expect to pay an additional 8% tax, year-round.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART

The following price scale is used as a guideline for rates charged for a double room per day. All prices are given in US dollars.

$	$75 or less
$$	$76-125
$$$	$126-200
$$$$	More than $200

The **St. Croix Hotel and Tourism Association** will assist you with all types of travel arrangements, including hotel reservations. Contact a representative at ☎ 800-524-2026 or 773-7117; fax 773-5883; e-mail stcroixinfo@worldnet.att.net.

In & Near Christiansted

Hotel Caravelle, 44 Queen Cross Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-544-0410 or 773-0687; fax 778-7004; www.hotelcaravelle.com; e-mail elsie@hotelcaravelle.com. 43 rooms; one suite. $$.

Expect to be captivated by this intimate hotel with its enviable location overlooking Christiansted Harbor. Guests step directly from the busy core of the historic district into a quiet courtyard lobby dominated by a seahorse-studded fountain surrounded with tropical plants. The old-world, new-world effect is an ideal centerpiece for this modern Euro-Carib inn.

Owner Sid Kalmans makes hospitality a priority, and it's not unusual to find the staff singing Happy Birthday to a celebrating guest. Even Mrs. Beasley, the resident cat, purrs a welcome to anyone walking through *her* courtyard. Repeat guests say it's friendly touches such as these that draw them back to Caravelle year after year.

Other lures include spacious air-conditioned rooms located on two upper floors. A low wall separates the dressing area and bathroom from the bedroom, which features either one king-size bed or two double beds, ceiling fans, cable TV, a small refrigerator and direct-dial telephone. The penthouse suite has a living room, kitchen, two bathrooms, an oversized bedroom and breathtaking views.

International flags fly over the upper-level swimming pool and sun decks, where guests relax in a garden-like setting. Rum Runner, the on-site restaurant and bar, serves meals, drinks and snacks right at the water's edge. (See the review under *Where to Eat*, below.)

Protestant Cay's excellent beach and watersports center are just across the harbor, and transportation is by ferry, which leaves every 10 minutes from the nearby dock. Caravelle Arcade adjoins the hotel and houses a dive center, the aquarium and various duty-free shops. Other stores, restaurants and attractions are within easy walking distance.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Call well in advance for a reservation, especially during high season, because Caravelle is often fully booked by business travelers, tour groups and repeat guests.*

Hotel on the Cay, Protestant Cay, PO Box 4020, St. Croix, USVI 00822. ☎ 800-524-2035 or 773-2035; fax 773-7046. 55 rooms and suites. $$$.

The tiny islet just across from the wharf in Christiansted Harbor is Protestant Cay, home to this fine hotel with impressive views and an outstanding watersports center. A complimentary ferry zips guests back and forth across the narrow strip of water that separates the cay from town. (Guests of other hotels may take the ferry to the cay for $4, round trip.) Each air-conditioned room has a kitchenette, small balcony, cable TV and telephone. The main draw here is the wide sandy beach with its large assortment of water toys. In addition, there's a freshwater swimming pool, beach bar and steakhouse restaurant.

King Christian Hotel, 59 King Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-534-2012 or 773-6330 or 773-2285; fax 773-9411; www.kimgchristian.com; e-mail kchotel@viaccess.net. 39 rooms. $$.

This recently refurbished hotel is located in a three-story building that was once a harborside warehouse. It features both superior and budget rooms, with the difference being view and size. You can save a few dollars if you simply want a clean, comfortable room. It costs a bit more for larger accommodations with two double beds and a balcony overlooking Christiansted Harbor. All units have air conditioning, ceiling fans, cable TV, coffee makers, small refrigerators and safes. The nearest beach is on Protestant Cay, a $4 ferry ride across the harbor, but the hotel has a swimming pool, sun deck, shaded patio and waterfront restaurant. All the pleasures of historic Christiansted are just around the corner.

King's Alley Hotel, 57 King Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-843-3574 or 773-0103; fax 773-4431. 35 rooms. $$.

Ask for one of the new deluxe rooms featuring four-poster beds at this hotel adjoining King's Alley shopping complex on the historic waterfront. All rooms are cooled by both air conditioning and ceiling fans, and second-story rooms have wide French doors that open onto spacious balconies. Even the older no-frills rooms are equipped with private baths, cable TV and telephones. Guests can swim in the freshwater pool or take the Protestant Cay ferry to the beach.

The Breakfast Club, 18 Queen Cross, Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 773-7383; fax 773-8642; e-mail reservations@the-breakfast-club.christianste.vi.us. 9 rooms. $.

It's hard to say whether the best feature of this B&B is the scrumptious complimentary breakfast cooked each morning by owner Toby Chapin or the outdoor hot tub where guests gather to exchange travel tips and celebrate island life. Both are outstanding. The 1950-ish stone house is divided into nine units with kitchenettes and private baths. Only one room is air conditioned, but all have fans. Don't expect lavish furniture and slick decorations, but the rooms are clean and comfortable, town is within walking distance, you'll meet lots of nice people, and you can't beat the price.

Hilty House, 2 Hermon Hill, St. Croix, USVI 00824. ☎ 773-2594 (phone/fax); e-mail hiltyhouse@worldnet.att.net. 7 rooms and cottages. $$.

This infatuating B&B started as a rum factory in 1732. It's now a beautifully decorated plantation-style inn with various guest accommodations, including three cottages. Located in the hills about a 10-minute drive south of Christiansted, the grounds contain a landscaped garden dominated by a towering 200-year-old rubber tree and a large freshwater swimming pool.

Rooms inside the main house are spacious and splendidly furnished. Common areas include a large living room with high ceilings, an open kitchen where guests can serve themselves at the honor bar and a cozy library with books and a TV. Cottages have cooking facilities, TVs and telephones. A gourmet breakfast is included in the room rates for guests in the main house. Owners Hugh and Jacqui Haore-Ward serve a three-course ethnic dinner on Monday evenings. Advance reservations are essential, and you should call early because the $30 *prix-fixe* meal is popular with locals and guests.

East End

Buccaneer, Estate Shoys on Gallows Bay (Route 82), PO Box 25200, St. Croix, USVI 00824. ☎ 800-255-3881 or 773-2100; fax 778-8215; www.thebuccaneer.com; 134 rooms and suites. $$$$.

This sprawling 300-acre resort on the beach at Gallows Bay has a gripping history that began in 1653 when a Knight of Malta built the manor that now stands beside one of the hotel's swimming pools. Over the years, the estate has been a sugar plantation, a cotton farm and a cattle ranch. In 1948, the Armstrong family opened an 11-room hotel on the property and has been enlarging the place ever since. Today, owners-managers Robert and Elizabeth Armstrong maintain the

warm hospitality at the resort which has grown to 134 rooms and suites.

The beautifully landscaped compound is a 10-minute drive east of Christiansted and includes an 18-hole golf course, eight championship-quality tennis courts, three beaches, two swimming pools, a jogging trail, a health spa and fitness facility, a watersports center, beach bars and two full-service restaurants. Recently, the common areas have been spruced up and 12 deluxe beachfront rooms have been added.

Air-conditioned rooms fall into eight categories and are located in the grand main building or one of the attractive low-rise buildings built on the hillside or waterfront. Basic rooms are small, but comfortably furnished. The newest rooms are on the beach and outfitted with four-poster beds and whirlpool tubs. All accommodations have ceiling fans, refrigerator, cable TV, private safe, direct-dial phone and a balcony or patio. A complimentary full breakfast is served each morning.

Villa Madeleine, Tague Bay on Route 82, PO Box 3109, St. Croix, USVI 00824. ☎ 800-496-7379 or 778-8782; fax 773-2150. 43 villas. $$$$.

The centerpiece of this condominium resort is a hilltop West Indian plantation house with elegant furniture and luxurious decorations that serves as a common area and restaurant. Villas are scattered on the landscaped hillside below. Each air-conditioned unit has its own 11-by-20-foot plunge pool and a full kitchen. The one- and two-bedroom condos are comfortably furnished with rattan rocking chairs, bamboo four-poster beds and armoires hiding cable TVs and VCRs. Bathrooms are designed with room for two and come with oversized pink-marble showers and thick towels. Most of the villas are privately owned and rented by a management company when the owners are off-island. The nearest beaches are about a five-minute drive from the compound. There are two on-site tennis courts.

Divi Carina Bay Resort, 25 Estate Turner Hole/South Shore Road (Route 60), St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-554-2008 or 773-9700; www.divicarina.com. 126 rooms, suites and villas. $$$$.

This brand-new resort boasts the only casino in the Virgin Islands. The 10,000-square-foot facility features 300 slot machines, 13 gaming tables and an elegant restaurant. Gaming runs from 10 am-4 pm, Monday-Friday, and 10 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday. This is the place to be if you want late-night entertainment and plenty of action.

Rooms are decorated in shades of blue to match the sea. All have a furnished patio or balcony. Every unit features satellite TV with VCR, two queen-size beds or one king-size bed and a wet bar with a mini refrigerator, microwave and coffee maker. Bathrooms are outfitted with thick towels, bathrobes, hair dryer and deluxe grooming products.

Oceanview villas have king-size beds in the separate bedroom, a queen-size sleeper-sofa in the living room, one bathroom with a shower and a second bathroom with a whirlpool tub and separate shower, plus a fully equipped kitchen. One-bedroom suites are furnished with queen-size beds and queen-size sleeper-sofas.

Amenities include a watersports center on the 1,000-foot white-sand beach, a freshwater swimming pool, lighted Hard-Tru tennis courts and a health spa. The activities desk will arrange sightseeing tours, fishing excursions, dive trips and day sails to Buck Island.

Tamarind Reef Hotel, 5001 Tamarind Reef on Route 82, St. Croix, USVI 00820-4230. ☎ 800-619-0014 or 773-4455; fax 773-3989; www.usvi.net/hotel/tamarind; e-mail tamarind@usvi.net. 46 rooms. $$$.

If you love settling into a casual well-run hotel with lots of amenities and personal attention, Tamarind Reef will suit you perfectly. Owners Dick and Marcy Pelton keep careful watch over guest-pleasing details at this modern resort adjoining Green Cay Marina. Several types of accommodations are available, all featuring custom-made bedspreads and window treatments fashioned from original-design tropical print fabrics signed by the artist.

Each unit is cooled by both air-conditioning and ceiling fans, and ground-floor rooms have landscaped patios while upper rooms open onto private balconies overlooking the sea. Standard fixtures include phones, satellite TV, clock radios and private safes. In addition, bathrobes, irons and ironing boards are provided, and the spacious bathrooms have hair dryers and magnifying mirrors. Guests also enjoy in-room refrigerators and coffee makers.

Deluxe rooms with a queen-size bed and sleeper-sofa feature well-equipped kitchenettes, and the larger junior suites have two queen-size beds. One deluxe suite is outfitted for mobility-impaired guests and has adjoining accommodations for a companion.

A complimentary light breakfast is served on the poolside deck each morning. Guests may use watersports equipment from the well-stocked beach shack. Snorkeling is good along the reef that begins near shore, and there's also kayaking out to nearby Green Cay. Boats leave from the adjacent marina for fishing and diving trips or day sails to Buck Island.

Deep End Bar, beside the large freshwater swimming pool that overlooks the sea, serves fat burgers, delicious sandwiches, light salads and icy drinks. For more elegant dining, make reservations at The Galleon, a waterfront restaurant overlooking the marina that specializes in gourmet French and Italian cuisine (see the review under *Where to Eat*).

North Shore

Sunterra Carambola Beach Resort, Davis Bay on Route 80, PO Box 3031, Kingsmill, St. Croix, USVI 00851. ☎ 800-424-1943 or 778-3800; fax 778-1682; www.sunterra.com; e-mail getaways@sunterra.com. 144 suites. $$$$.

A description of Carambola sounds like paradise in *America's Paradise*. Laurance Rockefeller built the villas. Robert Trent Jones designed the golf course. One of the world's best beach-access dive sites is directly offshore.

This casually elegant resort, covering 2,000 rolling waterfront acres between Christiansted and Frederiksted on the sparsely developed north shore, presents St. Croix at its best. Suites occupy 24 two-story villas that spill down 28 acres of green hillsides to Davis Bay. The award-winning 18-hole golf course spreads across a lake-studded valley behind the villa compound.

Guest accommodations are in 500-square-foot units with separate living and sleeping areas that are furnished with Danish-antique reproductions. Each opens onto a private balcony or patio and features satellite television, air-conditioning, ceiling fans, mini refrigerator and spacious bathroom with oversized shower. A complimentary breakfast buffet is served every morning in one of the three restaurants.

Paths lead from the villas across lush landscaped grounds to a large freshwater swimming pool and two outdoor Jacuzzi tubs. Complimentary watersports equipment is available from the beach shack and the on-site scuba center organizes guided beach and boat dives. Other amenities include a fitness center, four lighted tennis courts and a well-stocked gift shop. The concierge can arrange for sightseeing tours, fishing trips, parasailing, horseback rides, sea kayaking and day sails to Buck Island.

A shuttle bus takes golfers to the course, where they receive discounted green fees. Some type of entertainment takes place in the restaurants or bar on most evenings, and the Sunday brunch is considered the best on the island.

Hibiscus Beach Hotel, 4131 La Grande Princesse, St. Croix, USVI 00820. ☎ 800-442-0121 or 773-4042; fax 773-7668; www.1hibiscus.com; e-mail hibiscus@worldnet.att.net. 38 rooms. $$$.

The alluring Hibiscus Beach Hotel sits on a lovely stretch of palm-shaded beach at Pelican Cove, just 10 minutes west of Christiansted. Comfortable rooms are tucked into six two-story structures that face the sea and are named for tropical flowers. All accommodations are air conditioned and have a private patio or balcony, one king or two double beds, ceiling fans and a mini-bar.

While the rooms are beautifully decorated and outfitted with many extras, return visitors also are drawn to the caring service and relaxed atmosphere. Manager Wendall Snider takes pride in saying that people arrive as guests and leave as friends. He and his loyal staff often receive notes and holiday cards from former guests who have fallen in love with the hotel and the island.

Amenities include a freshwater swimming pool, watersports equipment and hammocks on the beach. The Hideaway Restaurant is open daily for all meals and features buffets and live entertainment several times each week.

Rates are considered low for a prime beach hotel, and package deals offer further savings. Specials change seasonally, but the hotel often has a multi-night package designed for honeymooners, golfers or scuba divers.

The Waves at Cane Bay, Cane Bay, PO Box 1749, St. Croix, USVI 00851. ☎ 800-545-0603 or 778-1805; fax 778-4945; www.thewavesatcanebay.com. 12 rooms. $$$.

Divers won't find a better location than The Waves. It's built right into the rocks, directly on the water at Cane Bay, with easy beach access to the magnificent coral gardens that form the Cane Bay Wall. Romantics, beach bums and those who want to get away from it all will enjoy this intimate hotel, too.

Each studio unit is outfitted with cooking facilities, a king-size bed, ceiling fans, cable TV and a large screened balcony that overlooks the sea. Some accommodations also have air conditioning, but it's not essential, since rooms receive a cool breeze from the water.

On-site owners Kevin and Suzanne Ryan consider The Waves their *baby* and are anxious for everyone to adore it. Divers get the added benefit of Kevin's experience as an instructor and guide. A strikingly romantic open-air restaurant with attached bar sits right at the water's edge behind the hotel.

West End

The Frederiksted Hotel, 442 Strand Street, Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI 00840. ☎ 800-595-9519 or 772-0500; fax 778-4009; e-mail frederikstedx@caribbeans.com. 40 rooms. $$.

The outside could use an update, but rooms at this four-story waterfront hotel in the heart of Frederiksted are comfortable, clean and budget-priced. Each is air conditioned and outfitted with a TV, microwave and refrigerator. There's a swimming pool and sundeck, the restaurant serves well-priced meals all day, and the bar often features local entertainers. Location is a big plus here. You can get home quickly after Harbor Night or an evening at one of the nearby restaurants. During the day, you're near the tropical forest and some of the best beaches along the north and west coasts.

Cottages by the Sea, 127A Estate Smithfield, Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI 00840. ☎ 800-323-7252 or 772-0495; fax 772-1753. E-mail maccottage@worldnet.att.net. 20 cottages. $$.

These waterfront cottages scattered on three acres just outside Frederiksted are air conditioned and furnished with one king or two twin beds. Each unit has a kitchenette, ceiling fan and TV. Oversized group patios encourage guests to get together while grilling dinner or watching the sun set during happy hour. The atmosphere is casual, the accommodations are comfortably rustic, and you can't beat the price.

Where to Eat

International cuisine and West Indian specialties fill the menus of restaurants scattered across St. Croix. You can feast on familiar dishes or try something new and exotic. The following recommendations are a mix of restaurants in all price ranges. Many are in or near Christiansted, but you'll find excellent choices throughout the island.

See *Dining*, page 34, for a list of common West Indian food specialties.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and tip. There's no tax on meals.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-20
$$$	$21-35
$$$$	More than $35

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Restaurants often change their hours or close for extended periods during low season, so call to check.*

In & Near Christiansted

Indies, 55-56 Company Street, ☎ 692-9440; www.indiesrestaurant.com. Caribbean. $$$. Open Monday-Friday, 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6 pm-9:30 pm; Saturday, 6 pm-9:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

The atmosphere is pure old-Caribbean at this popular restaurant set in a plant-filled 18th-century courtyard. Daily fresh ingredients determine the menu, but fresh fish is the standout. Try the grilled vegetable antipasto with roast garlic for starters, move on to one of the grilled fish specials, and finish with a freshly made dessert. Wednesday and Friday are sushi nights in the bar from 5 pm-8 pm, and live entertainment is featured a couple of evenings each week.

Tutto Bene, 2 Company Street, ☎ 773-5229. Italian. $$. Nightly 5 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations for five or more.

Everyone's raving about this hot spot. The name means "everything good," so you can't go wrong with anything created by head chef Jeannette Wright. If you're on a budget or not too hungry, order the grilled flatbread pizza with a choice of toppings. For a heartier meal, the veal *saltimbocca* is excellent. It's a not-so-basic veal scallopine with proscuitto, fresh sage and assorted cheeses. Other familiar Italian dishes are offered, or you might try the fresh fish. Just save room for one of the homemade desserts.

STIXX on the Waterfront, Pan Am Pavilion/39 Strand Street, ☎ 773-5157. International/American. $$. Daily, 7 am-10 pm, plus a Sunday breakfast buffet, 7 am-2 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested.

This harborside restaurant specializes in lobster, but you can get a little bit of everything here. Try the shrimp scampi pizza for something different, or be adventuresome with the buffalo burger. There are also basic pizzas, beef burgers and plain steaks. Ask about the crab races during happy hour.

Bacchus, Queen Cross Street, ☎ 692-9922; www.restaurantbacchus.com. Continental. $$$. Wednesday-Sunday, 6 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Named for the mythological god of wine, this classy new restaurant features the largest wine selection on the island. Many excellent vintages are offered by the glass, so this is your chance to sample something new. The kitchen turns out superb steaks, lobster and fresh fish. After the wonderfully rich meal, indulge in a cup of French-press coffee.

RumRunners, Queen Cross Street/harborfront, ☎ 773-6585. International/American. $$. Daily, 7 am-11 pm; Sunday brunch served 10 am-2 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested for brunch and dinner.

From the name, you might expect a trendy bar. And, you'd be right. But, RumRunner is also a popular restaurant with fantastic views of Christiansted Harbor and a crowd-pleasing menu. On Sundays, a steel band plays during brunch, which features $2 mimosas and bloody Marys to complement a menu of peel-'n-eat shrimp, eggs Benedict, lobster salad and other popular dishes.

Monday through Saturday the restaurant offers a varied breakfast and lunch selection, and dinner each evening focuses on prime rib, Caribbean lobster, ribs and steaks. Mark Eckard, a talented local musician, entertains on Saturday nights with songs by popular artists such as James Taylor and Jimmy Buffett.

Drop by for happy hour, which runs from 4 pm to 6 pm everyday, and watch how the light changes on the water as the harbor goes from day to night. Well drinks and beer are bargain-priced, but you may want to try the RumRunner special, a heady mix of Cruzan rum, blackberry brandy, pineapple juice and several secret ingredients. If you stay for dinner, be sure to ask what the local fishermen brought in that day.

East End

Morning Glory Coffee & Tea, Gallows Bay, ☎ 773-6620. Coffee, tea, pastries, sandwiches. $. Monday-Friday, 7 am-5 pm; Saturday, 7 am-2 pm. No credit cards.

Freshly roasted and ground superior coffee is the highlight here. You can add a *beignet* or home-made muffin, but you can't walk past this delicious smelling spot without succumbing to a hot cuppa java. At lunchtime, the menu includes salads, sandwiches and wraps. Late afternoon is the perfect time to enjoy a cappuccino, latte or espresso. All types of tea also are available, and you can sit at a table inside or out.

Duggan's Reef, Tague Bay/Route 82, ☎ 773-9800. Caribbean/American. $$. Wednesday-Monday, 6 pm-9:30 pm; Sunday brunch, 11 am-3 pm; bar opens at 4:30 pm every day except Tuesday. Credit cards accepted. Reservations requested.

Right on the water at Reefs Beach, this casual open-air restaurant is a longtime favorite with locals and visitors. They close sporadically during the low season, so call if you plan to make a special trip to the East

End for dinner. Brunch is an eclectic mix of egg dishes, fish, soups and salads. The most popular dish at dinner is the pasta topped with lobster. Other choices include steaks, fresh fish, pastas and just-made desserts.

The Galleon, Green Cay Marina/Route 82, ☎ 773-9949. Mediterranean. $$$$. Daily, 6 pm-10 pm; bar opens daily at 5 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Arrive early to enjoy a glass of wine and watch the setting sun light up the sailboats in the marina. Then settle in for an excellent dinner of Caesar salad prepared tableside, followed by a French or Northern Italian entrée such as filet gorgonzola or osso buco. Fresh-baked bread and side dishes accompany each meal. Linger over your dessert or wine while the pianist entertains you with relaxing music.

North Shore & West End

Blue Moon, 17 Strand Street/Frederiksted, ☎ 772-2222. Cajun/Caribbean/vegetarian. $$. Tuesday-Friday, 11:30 am-2 pm; Tuesday-Sunday, 6 pm-9:30 pm; Sunday brunch, 11 am-2 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested.

An historic landmark building on the waterfront is home to this New Orleans-style bistro. Jazz musicians play during Sunday brunch and on Friday nights, and a crowd often gathers to enjoy the cool moves and hot sounds. The décor can best be described as tacky chic and arty, which goes well with the jazz. Appetizers are the most interesting choices on the menu, but the fresh fish is dependably good and you'll also see some chicken and steak options as well as vegetarian choices.

Sprat Hall Beach Restaurant, Route 63, ☎ 772-5855. Caribbean. $. Daily, 10 am-4 pm. If you're sightseeing on the West End, stop at historic Sprat Hall Plantation for a swim and lunch on the beach. Owners Joyce Hurd was born in the great house and grew up on the island. She and her husband, Jim, invite guests to enjoy the white-sand beach (there's a $2 charge to use the showers and changing rooms) and order lunch at their casual waterside restaurant. Hot meals are served only from 11:30 am-2:30 pm and include local specialties such as conch fritters and flying fish. Burgers and salads also are available. The Hurd's daughter, Jill, leads horseback rides through the nearby rain forest. (Contact her at Paul and Jill's Equestrian Stables ☎ 772-2880.) Watch for the plantation a mile north of Frederiksted on Route 63.

Off The Wall, Cane Bay/Route 80, ☎ 778-4771. Light meals/drinks. $. Daily, 11:30 am-9 pm. Credit cards accepted.

This casual beach shack is named for the popular dive site in Cane Bay. Friendly people staff the bar and people come in to enjoy the drinks and simple food. It's a great place to meet locals and other travelers. Menu selections include sandwiches, nachos, pizza and fried fish. Try one of the tropical drinks invented by Michelle, the bartender. Musicians provide entertainment several nights each week.

Boz's Cane Bay Beach Bar, Cane Bay/Route 80, ☎ 778-5669. Light meals, burgers, drinks. $. Daily, 11 am-9 pm; Sunday brunch, 10 am-2 pm.

The view from this upper-level bar across the street from Cane Bay is fantastic and the freshly prepared food is delicious. Locals and visitors hang out here before and after diving or snorkeling, and the place is famous for its full moon parties. Since a full moon happens only once a month, Boz's holds a kick-back-Tuesday celebration as well. Both are great fun and feature live music. If you can't make it on Tuesday or during a full moon, stop by any evening to watch the fabulous sunset. The menu focuses on burgers, onion rings and sandwiches at lunch, then turns to pizza, barbecue and fresh fish at dinner. On Sundays, brunch (not a buffet) includes choices such as huevos rancheros, omelets and pancakes. Don't leave without trying one of the frozen drinks from the bar.

The Hideaway, Hibiscus Beach Hotel/Route 75, ☎ 773-4042. American. $$. Daily, 7 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

The views are great from this beachside restaurant. Patrick is the veteran bartender who makes killer frozen drinks. Dixie is the West Indian chef who has a talent for turning the catch of the day into a masterpiece and is well known for his seafood pasta. Arrive early to watch the ocean change color as the sun sets and you munch Hot Rocks appetizers. The Hideaway is also good for omelets at breakfast and burgers at lunch. There's live entertainment and dinner specials several night each week, but the schedule changes seasonally, so call ahead.

Nightlife

Pick up a free copy of *St. Croix This Week* to check out locations for live entertainment. Resorts, restaurants and bars regularly feature steel pan, reggae and jazz bands. In Christiansted and Frederiksted, follow the crowd and the music to the liveliest spots.

A group called **The Quadrille Dancers** puts on a great cultural show. The performers wear traditional island dress that was popular during plantation days, and the audience is invited to join the dancing. If you don't see the group listed in the newspaper, ask the receptionist or concierge at your hotel where you can see a performance.

Gaming and entertainment run all night at the new **Divi Carina Bay Casino.** ☎ 773-9700. Try your luck at the slot machines and game tables, or enjoy an elegant meal at the **Starlight Bar and Grille.**

Well-known entertainers frequently perform at the **Sidney Lee Theater** in the **Island Center for the Performing Arts**, on Route 79 north of Sunny Isle Shopping Center. ☎ 778-5272. The programs change frequently at this large amphitheater, so call to ask about the current schedule.

Harbor Night is a street festival held every other Wednesday when a cruise ship is docked at the Frederiksted pier. To find out which nights the cultural fair will take place, call Dalton & Associates, the events promoters, ☎ 772-4000; fax 772-4242; e-mail hdalton@viaccess.net. If it happens while you're on the island, be sure to attend. The action gets started along the waterfront around 7 pm and runs until midnight. Bands play Caribbean music, mocko jumbies and cultural dancers perform, local artists display their work and the best cooks on the island sell samples of their favorite recipes. It's great fun.

The entire island parties during the annual **Crucian Christmas Festival** held in early January. Other islandwide celebrations break out during the **Mumm's Cup Regatta** in early October and the **St. Croix Jazz and Caribbean Music and Art Festival** held at the end of October. Call the USVI Department of Tourism for exact dates and details. ☎ 800-372-8784.

Island Facts & Numbers

AIRPORT: Henry Rohlsen International Airport, ☎ 778-0589.

AREA CODE: The area code for all US Virgin Islands is 340. You may dial direct from the States.

BANKS, ATMs: Most banks are open Monday-Thursday, 9 am-3 pm and Friday, 9 am-4:30 pm. The VI Community Bank is open Saturday mornings. ATMs are available 24 hours a day at many locations, including the airport and the following banks: **Bank of Nova Scotia**, 4500 Estate Diamond, ☎ 778-5350; Sunshine Mall, ☎ 692-2440; 1156 King Street, Christiansted, ☎ 773-1013; and 420 Strand, Frederiksted, ☎ 772-0880. **Community Bank**, 5 Strand Street, Frederiksted, ☎ 772-0050; 12-13 King Street, Christiansted, ☎ 773-0440. **Chase Manhattan Bank**, King Christian Branch and Orange Grove Branch, both reached by calling ☎ 775-7777.

DRIVING: Traffic stays to the left. The speed limit is 35 mph in rural areas, 55 mph on open portions of Route 66, 20 mph in towns.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts, 60 cycles, as on the US mainland.

EMERGENCIES: Ambulance, ☎ 911; Fire Department, ☎ 911; Police, ☎ 911; Virgin Island Search and Rescue, ☎ 773-7150; St. Croix Hospital, ☎ 778-6311.

GOVERNMENT: The US Virgin Islands are an unincorporated territory with a non-voting delegate elected to the US House of Representatives. Anyone born on the islands is a US citizen.

LAUNDROMAT: Green Cay Marina, ☎ 773-1453; **St. Croix Marina,** ☎ 773-0289.

LIQUOR LAWS: The legal drinking age is 21, as on the US mainland. Minors may not enter bars or purchase liquor.

MONEY: The US dollar is the legal currency throughout the US Virgin Islands. Travelers' checks and major credit cards are acceptable at most locations, but always carry some cash for smaller establishments.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES: ***St. Croix This Week*** features up-to-date information about the island and is available free of charge at hotels and other tourist-oriented sites. ***St. Croix Guide Book*** is a clever publication put out free of charge by Great Dane, Inc. ☎ 776-6922. Pick one up at hotels, restaurants and tourist sites around the island or check out their website at www.stcroixguidebook.com.

Newspapers from some US cities are flown to St. Croix news stands daily. Look for the *Miami Herald* and *New York Times* at resort gift shops.

POST OFFICE: Post offices are found on Company Street in Christiansted, and at Gallows Bay, Kingshill, Sunny Isle and Frederiksted. Stamps are priced the same as on the US mainland.

TAXES: There is no sales tax or departure tax. An 8% surcharge is added to all hotel bills.

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY INFORMATION: ☎ 913.

TOURIST INFORMATION: In the US, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Division of Tourism**, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. ☎ 800-372-USVI (800-372-8784) or 212-332-2222; fax 212-332-2223; e-mail info@usvi.net.

You also may get information from **The Caribbean Information Office**, ☎ 800-621-1270 (US); ☎ 847-699-7570 (outside the US); fax 847-699-7583. Also try the **St. Croix Hotel and Tourism Association**, ☎ 800-524-2026 or 773-7117; fax 340-773-5883; e-mail stcroixinfo@worldnet.att.net.

In Canada, information is available from **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 3300 Bloor Street West, Suite 3120, Centre Tower, Toronto, Ontario M8X 2X3, ☎ 416-233-1414.

In the UK, contact **The US Virgin Islands Tourism Department**, 2 Cinnamon Row, Plantation Wharf, York Place, London SW11 3TW. ☎ 0171-978-5262; fax 0171-924-3171.

On St. Croix, a **Tourist Information** booth is set up at the airport. In addition, a Visitor's Bureau is open in the Old Customs Scalehouse near the wharf in Christiansted, ☎ 773-0495, and at the Custom House Building near the pier in Frederiksted, ☎ 772-0357. Both are open Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm.

WEBSITES: www.usvi.net; www.st-croix.com; www.visitstcroix.com; www.usviguide.com/stcroix.

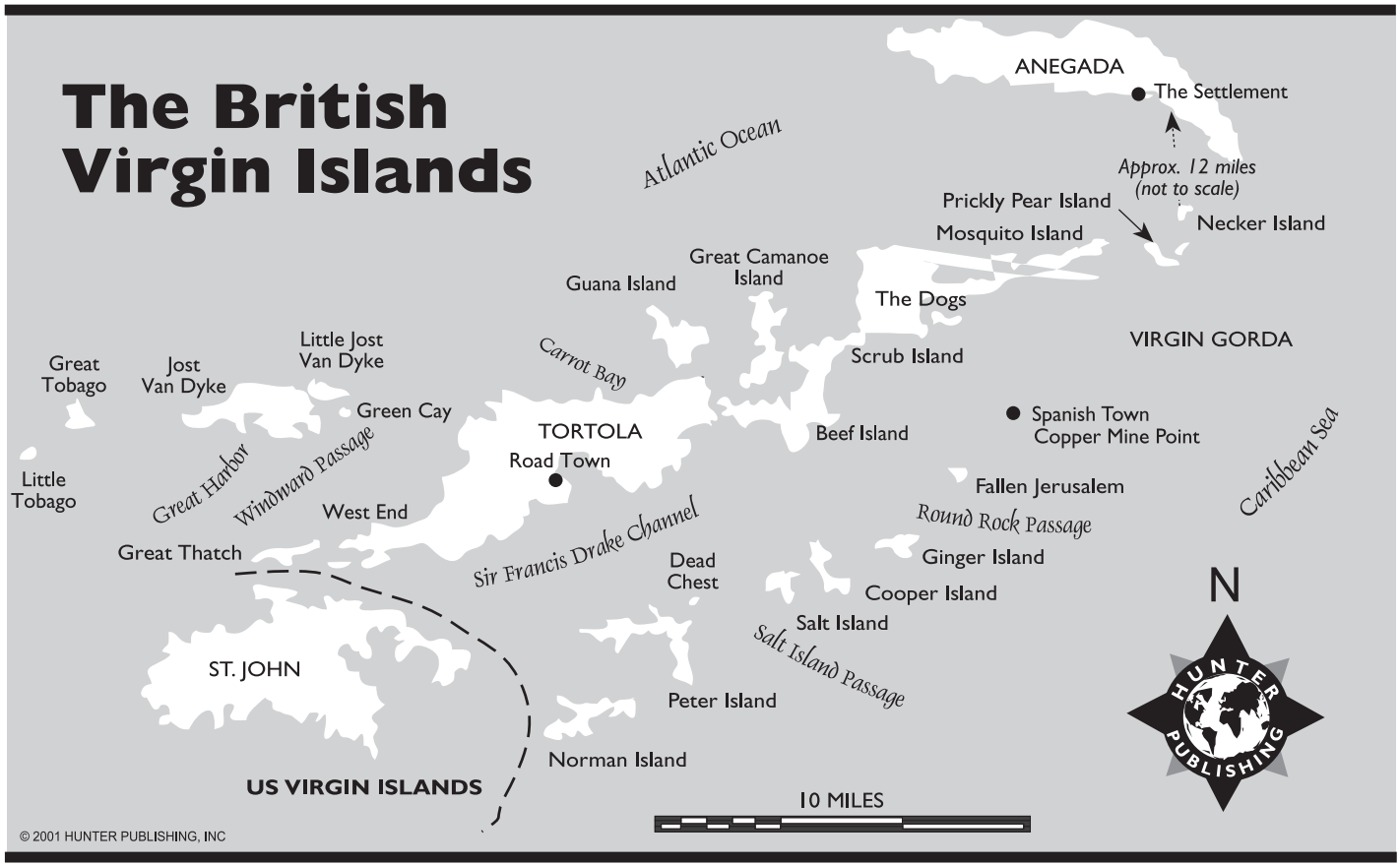
WEDDINGS: It's easy to get married in the USVI. For complete details, call the Department of Tourism for a brochure called ***Getting Married in the United States Virgin Islands***, ☎ 800-372-USVI. To apply for a license, write to the Territorial Court of the Virgin Islands, Box 70, St. Thomas, USVI 00804, ☎ 340-774-6680.

The British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands are often referred to as "nature's little secrets," and the 50 or so islands, islets and cays that form the archipelago have been successful in protecting themselves from mass tourism, so far. But yachtsmen discovered them years ago and escapists are captivated by them, so the "secrets" can't be safeguarded for long.

With the exception of Anegada, all the British Virgin Islands are exceedingly close to one another and to the US Virgin Islands. Collectively, they are strikingly different from their American siblings, but understandably similar to one another. Each is mountainous, covered in dense foliage, ringed by wide strands of fine white sand and surrounded by incredible reefs beneath clear turquoise waters. Still blessedly underdeveloped and natural due to strict environmental policies, they have just enough lavish creature comforts to make them enjoyable. Most of the BVIs are lined up along both sides of the 18-mile-long **Sir Francis Drake Channel**, which serves as a watery highway for ships, ferries and private yachts. **Tortola** anchors the northwestern side of Drake's Lake (the channel's nickname), and **Virgin Gorda** dominates the eastern end. **Norman, Peter, Salt, Cooper** and **Ginger** line up along the south side of the channel. **Jost Van Dyke** sits just off the western tip of Tortola's north coast, and **Anegada** is 12 miles north of Virgin Gorda. Anegada is flat and the only BVI made up of coral and limestone rather than volcanic debris. It has wonderful attributes and a host of loyal fans who enjoy its isolation, but it is surrounded by shallow coral reefs that make it hazardous for boats. This danger, and its remoteness from the other Virgins, puts it out of the island-hopping loop.

Tortola, Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke are the most developed and most visited islands. They offer travelers a medley of posh resorts, comfortable inns and secluded villas as well as excellent watersports, isolated beaches, unique shops and imaginative restaurants. Cooper Island, Peter Island, Norman Island and Marina Cay are sparsely populated and have limited facilities, but they are extremely popular with day-trippers. Most of the other islands and cays are enchanting spots favored by the yachting crowd.


The British Virgin Islands
ANEGADA
The Settlement
Atlantic Ocean
Approx. 12 miles (not to scale)
Prickly Pear Island
Necker Island
Mosquito Island
Great Camanoe Island
Guana Island
The Dogs
VIRGIN GORDA
Scrub Island
Carrot Bay
Little Jost Van Dyke
Great Tobago
Jost Van Dyke
Green Cay
Spanish Town
Copper Mine Point
TORTOLA
Road Town
Beef Island
Great Harbor
Windward Passage
Little Tobago
West End
Fallen Jerusalem
Caribbean Sea
Round Rock Passage
Great Thatch
Sir Francis Drake Channel
Dead Chest
Ginger Island
Cooper Island
Salt Island
Salt Island Passage
ST. JOHN
Peter Island
Norman Island
US VIRGIN ISLANDS
10 MILES
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

Tortola

Overview

Tortola means *turtle dove* in Spanish, and the 21-square-mile island is the largest, most populated and liveliest of the British Virgin Islands. Don't expect highrise hotels, glitzy nightclubs and contrived tourist attractions. Nature is the star here, and visitors primarily focus on watersports and sailing.

Sedate little **Road Town**, on the rugged south coast, is the capital of Tortola, which is, in turn, the capital of the BVI. The only other settlement that can be considered a town is **West End**, and it's not much more than an easygoing community. **East End** is a quiet little borough connected by a single-lane bridge to **Beef Island**, where the airport is located. The best beaches are found along the north shore at **Cane Garden Bay, Smugglers Cove** and **Brewers Bay**, and the island's highest point is 1,700-foot **Sage Mountain.**

A Brief History

Like the US Virgin Islands, many of the British Virgin Islands were inhabited by Indian tribes before they were sighted by Columbus during his second voyage in 1493. (See *The First Inhabitants*, page 2.) Only pirates and occasional European settlers paid the islands much attention throughout the 16th century.

Legend maintains that numerous pirates used the Virgins as a burial ground for their ill-gotten treasures. Explorers and scuba divers still hope to find chests full of seized gold hidden in caves or sunk in the ship wrecks around the islands.

Infamous Pirates of the Caribbean

Blackbeard was one of the most famous and feared pirates of all time, and supposedly he favored Norman Island as a hangout between raids. Details of his life are vague, but historians believe that he was born in Bristol, England around 1680 and given the name Edward Drummond by his middle-class parents. He used the name Edward Teach, presumably to shield his family from embarrassment, and was nicknamed Blackbeard because of his wild black facial hair.

Teach probably started his career as a government-licensed privateer, then turned to illegal blundering as a crew member aboard a pirate ship. Legends claim that before each raid, he tied pieces of hemp into his beard and set them afire so that a cloud of smoke swirled around his face as he threatened his victims with pistols and swords.

Blackbeard became a captain in 1717 when he took over a captured French slave ship that he renamed *Queen Anne's Revenge*. At the peak of his short career, he commanded a four-ship fleet and a crew of 300 men. He is credited with looting around a hundred ships from the Virgin Islands to the Bay Islands off Honduras. His most famous act was blockading the busy port at Charleston, South Carolina. Soon after this week-long blockade, *Queen Anne's Revenge* hit a sandbar off the North Carolina coast and sank. Blackbeard escaped, but was killed in a bloody battle with soldiers commanded by Lieutenant Robert Maynard off the coast of North Carolina on November 22, 1718.

In November 1996, a ship that is believed to be *Queen Anne's Revenge* was found in 20 feet of water off Beaufort, North Carolina. Archeologists hope to confirm the raised ship's identity, but the process is hindered by the fact that any pirate's ship contains artifacts from all the other ships it raided.

Sir Francis Drake was a British hero and the first commander to circumnavigate the world. In addition, he was one of the Caribbean's most famous privateers. If the loot he captured from Spanish galleons was converted into today's currency, it would equal about 68 million British pounds, or 42.5 million US dollars.

Drake began as a private raider who gained praise from the English for his successful attacks on Spanish ports and galleons. In 1577, Queen Elizabeth I gave Drake a letter of marque and financed his expedition in the *Golden Hind* to the west coast of South America. There he attacked, looted and freed the Spanish ship *Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion.*

When the defeated ship limped back to port with its humiliating story, every Spanish ship in the area set out to capture and hang Drake. Rather than head directly back to England, he decided to sail west through the Pacific. After a difficult voyage, he arrived home in 1579 – the first commander to sail around the world and live to tell about it. (Magellan died before one of his ships completed the journey in 1522.)

Queen Elizabeth knighted him on board the *Golden Hind,* and the channel that cuts through the center of the British Virgin Island archipelago is named in his honor.

Among the few women pirates, **Anne Bonny** and **Mary Read** are the best known. They were born around the end of the 17th century and fought together on a ship commanded by **Calico Jack Rackham** (the alleged designer of the skull-and-crossbones flag flown by pirate ships).

The two gained a reputation in the Caribbean for being ruthless fighters. Eventually, their ship was captured off the coast of Jamaica, and the women were tried along with the men in admiralty court. The entire crew was sentenced to hang, but the women were pregnant and allowed to postpone their punishment. Before Mary's baby was born, she died in prison. Anne and her newborn disappeared from the jail. No one knows for sure what happened to Anne, but various reports claim her freedom was bought and she lived a long life under an assumed name in one of the American colonies.

The First Settlements

The **Dutch** are credited with establishing the first permanent settlement in the BVI; they set up a small community at Soper's Hole on Tortola in 1648. No other country contested the Dutch possession until 1672, when English soldiers overthrew the Dutch and claimed Tortola and Virgin Gorda for the British crown.

English settlers brought both sugar and slaves to Tortola, but the first colonists turned out to be better smugglers than farmers, and the island wasn't prosperous until British Quakers arrived in the 1700s. Soon, sugar, cotton, indigo and spices were being exported to European markets, and the BVI flourished.

Less than a century later, the thriving plantation society that had sprung up in the islands was crushed. Slave auctions ceased in the BVI in 1803, and all slaves were emancipated in 1838. This loss of manpower, coupled with decreased demand for Caribbean produce, resulted in disaster for plantation owners. Most returned to Europe and left the islands in the hands of former slaves.

The 1900s

In 1917, when the Danish islands became a US territory, residents of the British islands were struggling along as mediocre farmers and fishermen. Then, in 1956, the BVI won the right to became a separately administered entity, and things began to change quickly. Cuba was closed to Americans in the early 1960s, and travelers began looking for new

vacation grounds. In 1965, wealthy American, Laurance Rockefeller, built Little Dix Resort on Virgin Gorda. In 1967, a new constitution gave the BVI a bit more governmental autonomy under British control. In 1968, an airport was built adjacent to Tortola on Beef Island. In 1969, Americans Charlie and Ginny Cary opened the Moorings yacht chartering operation on Tortola and set the BVI yacht-chartering industry on the fast track.

Today, the British islands are more American than British, and more Caribbean than anything else. The US dollar is the legal currency and most imports come from Miami. Driving is still on the left side of the road, but the hybrid culture created by past slaves and slave owners is evident in the food, music and art.

■ Getting There

By Air

Air service is increasing, but there still are no scheduled direct flights from North America, Canada or Europe to Tortola. You can make easy connections through Puerto Rico, St. Thomas or St. Croix on several small carriers. Flight time from St. Thomas is about 15 minutes and from Puerto Rico it's about 30 minutes. Since the planes fly low, you often get awesome views of the islands as you pass over them. (See *Getting There* in the St. Thomas chapter, page 41, for information about carriers that fly to San Juan and St. Thomas.)

You'll arrive at the airport on **Beef Island**, which connects to the east end of Tortola by the single-lane **Queen Elizabeth Bridge.**

NOTE: *The area code for all of the British Virgin Islands is 284.*

American Eagle (☎ 800-433-7300) has several daily flights from both San Juan and St. Thomas to the airport on Beef Island/Tortola. **Cape Air** (☎ 800-352-0714; www.flycapeair.com) provides hourly service from San Juan and St. Thomas to Beef Island/Tortola. **LIAT** (☎ 800-468-0482) flies to Beef Island/Tortola from several Caribbean islands including St. Kitts, Antigua, St. Martin, St. Thomas and Puerto Rico. **Air Sunshine** (☎ 284-495-8900) also has scheduled flights from Puerto Rico and St. Croix to Beef Island/Tortola, and **Clair Aero Services** (☎ 284-495-2271) flies from St. Thomas to Beef Island/Tortola three times each week.

Seaborne Aviation (☎ 888-359-8687) offers seaplane transportation to West End, Tortola from St. Thomas and sightseeing flights throughout the USVI and BVI.

By Ferry

Native Son (☎ 888-273-3284) provides service from Red Hook, St. Thomas to West End, Tortola, and from Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas to both Road Town and West End, Tortola several times each day. **Smith's Ferry** (☎ 340-775-7292 in Charlotte Amalie; 340-775-2569 in Red Hook and 284-495-4495 on Tortola) runs daily service to the West End and Road Town on Tortola from Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, and to the West End from Red Hook. **Inter-Island Boat Services** (☎ 284-495-4166 on Tortola; 340-776-6597 on St. John) has service from Red Hook, St. Thomas to Cruz Bay, St. John and then goes on to West End, Tortola. Round-trip tickets are approximately $40.

DEPARTURE TAX

You will be charged a departure tax when you leave the BVI. The per person cost is $10 if you leave by plane and $5 if you leave by boat.

■ Getting Around

By Car

If you're confident you can handle driving an American-style car, with left-hand steering, on the left side of the road (European style), rent a jeep or car and explore the island on your own. Most of Tortola is rural with good roads, but traffic can be heavy in populated areas, the roundabouts are tricky and mountain roads have steep grades and blind curves. Stick with taxis and tour buses if you're unsure of your skills.

Taxi vans meet every flight and the strong drivers' association is backed by government regulations that prohibit car rental at the airport. You'll have to arrange to pick up your car at the rental office or ask to have it delivered to your hotel. Some resorts rent cars by the day or week right on the premises. Visitors are required to have a valid driver's license and a temporary BVI permit, which costs $10, to drive on Tortola.

National and local companies rent compact cars for around $50 per day or $300 per week. You usually can find a reduced rate during the low season, but reserve well in advance and don't expect any discounts during the peak winter months. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are nice, but not necessary, and open jeeps will be a problem if you want to lock up valuables.

NOTE: *The area code for all of the British Virgin Islands is 284.*

RENTAL CAR AGENCIES	
A-OK	☎ 494-0005
Alphonso	☎ 494-8746; fax 494-8736
Anytime	☎ 494-2875
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084 or 494-2193; fax:494-4218
Budget	☎ 494-2639; fax; 494-4975
Caribbean	☎ 494-2698
Coconut	☎ 494-4932
D & D	☎ 495-7676; fax 494-8241
Del's	☎ 495-9356
Denil Clyne	☎ 495-4900
Dollarz	☎ 800-800-4000 or 494-6093; fax 494-7837; e-mail dollar@caribsurf.com
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3131 or 494-6228; fax 494-6060
Honey Bee	☎ 494-3666; fax 494-3667
Hopkins	☎ 494-3925; fax 494-4356
International	☎ 494-2516; fax 494-4715; e-mail intercar@caribsurf.com
Itgo	☎ 494-2639
Jerry's	☎ 495-4111
National	☎ 494-3197; fax 494-4085; e-mail national@surfbvi.com
Tola	☎ 494-8652; fax 494-8654
West End	☎ 494-6228

By Taxi

Taxis meet flights at the airport on Beef Island and you'll be sharing the car or van with other passengers unless you make arrangements in

advance for a private pick-up. Rates are regulated, but unpublished, so you should ask the fare to your destination before you get into the taxi. Expect to pay about $15 for two in a group van from the airport to a hotel near Road Town and around $25 to a hotel on the West End.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Some hotels contract with drivers to pick up guests at the airport and add the fare to the guest's bill at check-out, so don't think the friendly driver who refuses payment at your destination is providing a free service.*

It's easy to find or summon a taxi from most points on the island, and you can arrange for drivers to drop you off and return for you if you want to spend time at a remote beach or other secluded location.

TAXI COMPANIES	
Antwin George Son & Nephew Taxi Service (Beef Island)	☎ 496-1997
BVI Taxi Stand	☎ 494-7519
Beef Island Taxi Association	☎ 495-1982
C. Rabsatt Taxi Service (Beef Island)	☎ 495-2378
Nanny Cay Taxi Service	☎ 494-0539
P.R. Transport Ltd. (Dougie Penn, East End)	☎ 495-2466
Quality Taxi Service (Wickham's Cay/Road Town)	☎ 494-8397; fax 494-8398
Waterfront Taxi Stand (Road Town)	☎ 494-3456
Wayne Robinson Taxi (West End)	☎ 494-4097
West End Taxi	☎ 495-4934

By Ferry

If you want to make day trips to other islands by ferry, call or stop by the ferry terminals to check schedules. Departure times may change seasonally and extra crossings are added during peak travel times. Most ferries dock at the main ports of entry in Road Town or West End, but some leave from other marinas or bays so you need to know which boats leave each dock and where they are destined.

Speedy and **Smith's** travel between Road Town and The Valley on Virgin Gorda. The trip takes about 35 minutes and costs $10 one way. The two companies stagger their departure times, which makes it convenient to leave and return on the same day. Buy only a one-way ticket, unless you want to travel both ways at times offered by one company.

Contact **Speedy** on Tortola at ☎ 494-6154 or on Virgin Gorda at ☎ 495-5240; fax 495-5755. Contact **Smith's** on St. Thomas at ☎ 340-775-7292, fax 340-774-5532 or on Tortola at ☎ 494-4495.

The **M/V *When*** (☎ 494-2997) shuttles between West End, Tortola and Great Harbor, Jost Van Dyke daily. Occasionally, the ***Nubian Princess*** (☎ 495-4999) handles the trip to Jost, and both boats leave from the same dock. The one-way fare is $10 and takes about 30 minutes on the *When* and approximately 20 minutes on the *Nubian Princess*.

Nubian Princess also makes the 45-minute trip between the West End, Tortola and Red Hook, St. Thomas daily except Saturday. **Inter-Island** (☎ 495-4166) travels between Cruz Bay, St. John and West End, Tortola daily, and to Jost Van Dyke on weekends.

North Sound Express (☎ 495-2271) leaves from the dock next to the Trellis Bay Market, near the airport on Beef Island, for Bitter End Resort and Leverick Bay in the North Sound, as well as The Baths in the Valley, near Yacht Harbor and Spanish Town, on Virgin Gorda. The trip takes 10 minutes and is free. You can also catch a free ferry (☎ 494-2174) to Pusser's Marina Cay restaurant/resort from the Government Ferry Dock near the Conch Shell Point Restaurant at Trellis Bay.

The **Peter Island Ferry** (☎ 495-2000) leaves from a dock at Baughers Bay off Blackburn Road on the east side of the harbor about a 10-minute drive outside Road Town for Sprat Bay, the water entrance to Peter Island Resort. The fare is $14 round trip, but there's no charge if you have a reservation for dinner at the resort. Overnight guests of the resort are met at the airport and transported free of charge by boat from a private dock at Trellis Bay on Beef Island.

■ Touring the Island

Guided Tours

Several companies and private guides give excellent tours of Tortola. Their stories and insider information will both entertain and educate you. Expect to pay about $45 for a two- or

three-hour tour of Tortola for up to three people. **West End Taxi Service** (☎ 495-4934) has 25 driver/guides who have been showing guests their island since 1980. Find them outside the West End ferry terminal.

The **BVI Taxi Association** (☎ 494-2872) provides drivers/guides throughout the island. **Larry Henley**, owner of Cane Garden Bay Superette, is an excellent independent guide with a comfortable van. Contact him at ☎ 495-9455. **Travel Plan Tours** (☎ 494-2872) conducts island tours and arranges snorkeling trips and sailing or fishing excursions. In addition, you may contact the drivers listed above under *Taxi Companies* to set up a tour of the island's highlights.

Smith Ferry Services (☎ 340-775-7292; fax 340-774-5532 on St. Thomas and 284-494-4495/494-2355 in the BVI; e-mail magicplace@hotmail.com) offers a variety of ferry/land tour packages for day trips to Tortola and Virgin Gorda. ***Native Son*** (☎ 284-774-8685/495-4617 in the BVI; 340-775-3111; fax 340-779-2811 on St. Thomas) has ferry/land day excursions to Virgin Gorda and Tortola from St. Thomas, and will plan customized group trips.

Independent Island Tour

The best way to see Tortola is to take an up-down-and-over drive along the lofty, twisting roads that meander through the island. Start by traveling the south-shore road that runs from **Frenchmans Cay** and **West End,** around **Road Bay** as it passes through **Road Town**, to **East End**, where it crosses the **Queen Elizabeth Bridge** to **Beef Island**. Then tackle **Ridge Road**, which climbs and plummets through the central hills, for stunning views of neighboring islands across the clear turquoise sea. Finally, tour the spectacular north-shore beaches and their funky-to-fabulous bars, restaurants, shops and resorts.

The entire island centers around **Road Town**, the capital of the British Virgin Islands, and its harbor on beautiful **Road Bay**, where ferries, cruise ships and private yachts arrive from international ports. The town wraps around the bay and spreads up into the green hills that form the islands central ridge.

At first glance, Road Town appears to be a sleepy tropical village not quite in step with the 21st century. In reality, it is a thriving center of maritime business, offshore finance and island government. The façade is deliberate. An attempt to distinguish itself from its US sister islands and stay true to its Caribbean culture.

The most interesting area for visitors is the quaint section between Waterfront Drive and Main Street, directly across and just west of the ferry dock. This is a great place to roam on foot, do a little shopping and sample delicious island cuisine. (See *Where to Shop* and *Where to Eat*.)

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *The unofficial local dress code prohibits walking around Road Town in swimsuits or other skimpy attire. No one should go shirtless or shoeless.*

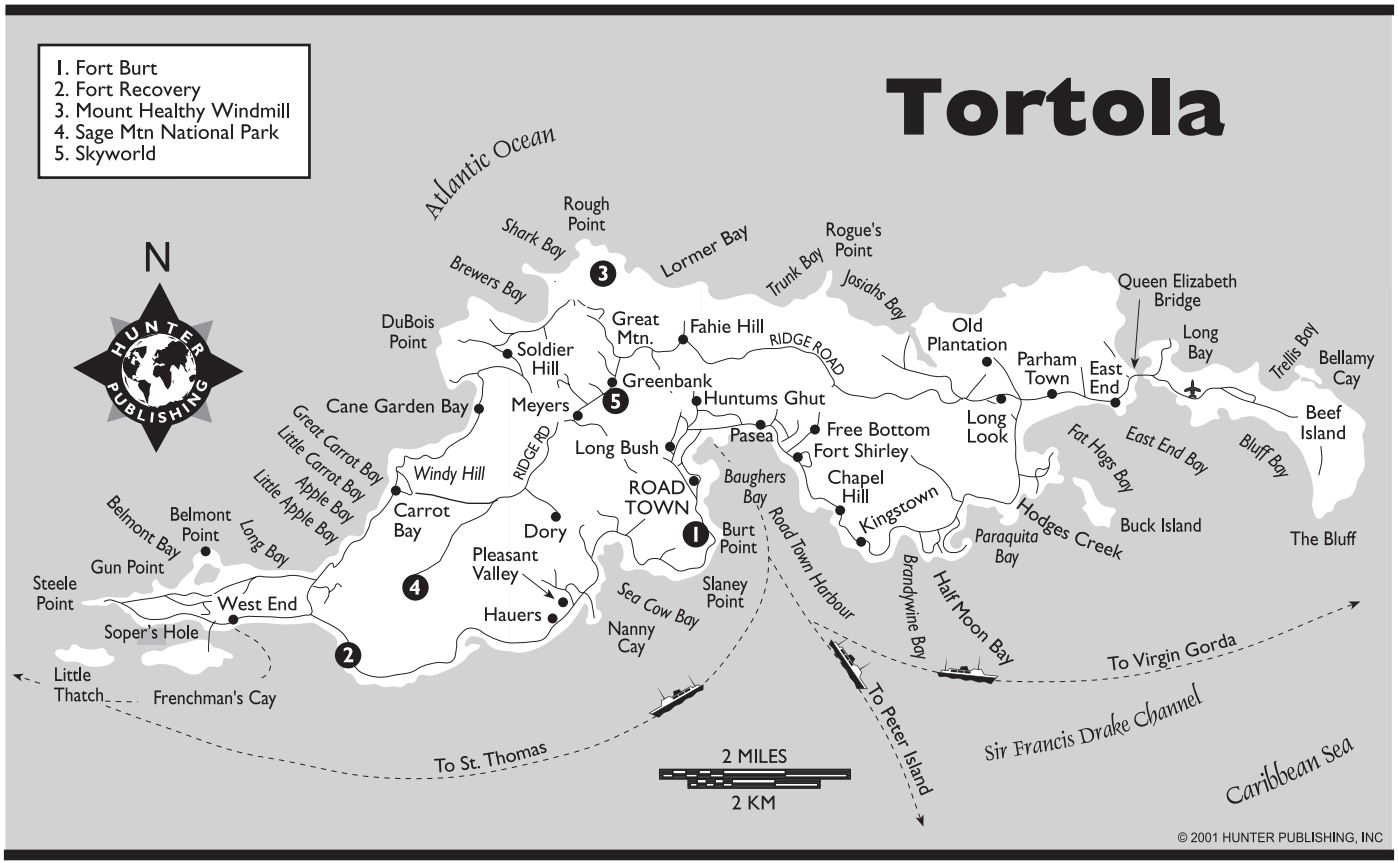
Main Street is wedged against the base of a hillside, which was the only flat land available before much of the harbor was filled in. Most of the street's charm and character comes from the jumble of cars and pedestrians that crowd into the narrow lane lined with historic wooden buildings with red tin roofs.

Get a crash course on Tortola's tropical vegetation by visiting the four-acre **J.R. O'Neal Botanical Gardens**, across from the police station on Main Street. This peaceful garden began early in the 1900s as an agricultural experiment sponsored by the government. Today it is run by volunteers and the BVI National Park Trust. Highlights include a miniature rain forest and fern house, 62 varieties of palms and a cactus garden. Many species of birds are drawn to the flowering bushes and brilliant flamboyant trees. Benches along the red-brick pathways tempt you to linger in the shade to watch redlegged tortoises and peach-faced love birds. There's no admission charge and the gardens are open Monday-Saturday, 9 am-4 pm. ☎ 494-4997.

As you drive around the island, watch for the following sites:

Historic **Fort Burt** is now a hotel and restaurant, but it was built by the Dutch and rebuilt by the English to guard the entrance to Road Bay Harbor in the 1600s. The foundation and arsenal are the most intact historic ruins on the island, and the view of the harbor from the hillside grounds is awesome. Look for the fort high above Waterfront Drive west of Road Town. (See *Where to Eat* for information about the restaurant.)

Fort Recovery was built by the Dutch in 1660. The unrestored ruins are about eight miles west of Road Town on the grounds of Fort Recovery Estate, a compound of tourist villas. You can walk around the estate and explore the lookout tower with three-foot-thick stone walls,


1. Fort Burt
2. Fort Recovery
3. Mount Healthy Windmill
4. Sage Mtn National Park
5. Skyworld
Tortola
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Atlantic Ocean
Rough Point
Shark Bay
Brewers Bay
Lormer Bay
Trunk Bay
Rogue's Point
Josiahs Bay
Queen Elizabeth Bridge
Long Bay
Trellis Bay
Bellamy Cay
Beef Island
DuBois Point
Soldier Hill
Great Mtn.
Fahie Hill
RIDGE ROAD
Old Plantation
Parham Town
East End
Greenbank
Cane Garden Bay
Meyers
Huntums Ghut
Long Look
Great Carrot Bay
Little Carrot Bay
Apple Bay
Little Apple Bay
Windy Hill
RIDGE RD
Long Bush
Pasea
Free Bottom
Fort Shirley
Fat Hogs Bay
East End Bay
Bluff Bay
Belmont Bay
Belmont Point
Long Bay
Carrot Bay
ROAD TOWN
Baughers Bay
Chapel Hill
Kingstown
Dory
Burt Point
Road Town Harbour
Paraquita Bay
Hodges Creek
Buck Island
The Bluff
Gun Point
Steele Point
Pleasant Valley
Slaney Point
Brandywine Bay
Half Moon Bay
West End
Hauers
Sea Cow Bay
Nanny Cay
Soper's Hole
To Virgin Gorda
Little Thatch
Frenchman's Cay
To St. Thomas
To Peter Island
Sir Francis Drake Channel
Caribbean Sea
2 MILES
2 KM
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

but this isn't set up as a true tourist attraction. (See *Where to Stay* for information about the villas.)

The BVI National Park Trust has funded restoration of the **Mount Heal- thy Windmill**, part of an 18th-century sugar plantation. It is one of the few restored ruins on Tortola, and includes a factory, stables and workers' huts. The national park is open during daylight hours free of charge. Park in the clearing on Brewers Bay Road East, above Brewers Bay on the north coast, and walk through the green picket gate to the ruins.

Sage Mountain National Park is dominated by Sage Mountain, the highest point on Tortola at 1,716 feet. Trails lead up to the peak and through a small tropical forest, all that remains of a larger timberland that has been cut down in past centuries. Several spots offer striking vistas and mountain doves live in the tall old mahogany trees. The temperature at this higher elevation is usually comfortable for hiking and you'll see ferns, vines and flowers that don't grow anywhere else on the island. Visit free of charge during daylight hours. A large placard in the parking area outlines the trails through the park. The turnoff for Sage Mountain Road is on Ridge Road, west of Joe's Hill Road, which leads uphill from Road Town.

Skyworld, a restaurant situated at 1,337 feet in the hills above Road Town, has an observation deck that offers a 360° panorama of Tortola, the Caribbean Sea and islands as far away as St. Croix (40 miles) and Anegada (20 miles). Follow the signs on Ridge Road, west of Joe's Hill Road, to a sharp right turn that takes you uphill past a school to the parking lot. Arrive late in the afternoon to watch a spectacular sunset. (See *Where to Eat* for information about the restaurant.)

Adventures on Water

Best Beaches

Cane Garden Bay is the star of Tortola's dazzling north-side beaches. It's only a 15-minute drive from Road Town. Take Joe's Hill Road up the mountain to Ridge Road, then take Cane Garden Bay Road down to the north shore. A long stretch of white sand shaded by palm trees faces a calm bay filled with colorful sailboats. Buoys mark a swimming area and you can rent kayaks, Hobie Cats, boogie boards and pedalboats from **Pleasure Boats** (☎ 495-9660 or 495-9528 or 496-7554).

Several popular restaurants and bars are set back from the water and their music can be heard from every point on the beach. (See *Where to Eat*.) **Callwood's Rum Distillery** is across the road at the west end of the beach. Mr. Callwood still produces rum the old-fashioned way – from sugar cane grown on the island. Ask for permission to watch the process, then buy a souvenir bottle of rum before you leave.

If you take a right turn to the east off Cane Garden Bay Road, you'll find the less developed **Brewer's Bay**. You'll find good snorkeling around the rocks on the west end and out a short distance from the middle of the beach. Beware of strong currents along the outer points on each end of the bay. A small campground is on the west end of the beach. If you're in the mood for a hike, walk up to the restored mill on Mount Healthy above the east end of the bay.

West of Cane Garden Bay, the North Coast Road passes the drowsy fishing village of Carrot Bay and arrives at **Apple Bay**. The beach here is popular with surfers, especially in the winter when big waves roll in from the Atlantic. During the summer, the water tends to be calmer and is perfect for swimming and body surfing. Lunch, snacks and drinks are available at Sebastian's On The Beach and Bomba's Shack. (See *Tortola Nightlife*, page 264, for details about Bomba's famous full moon parties.)

Long Bay Beach, farther west on North Coast Road, is a picturesque span of sand that stretches for a mile to Belmont Point. Enjoy lunch at the casual Beach Café at the Long Bay Beach Resort on the eastern

end. Storms in the North Atlantic sometimes create rough surf here during the winter, but at other times the water is calm and excellent for swimming.

A rugged unpaved road leads from Long Bay to **Smuggler's Cove**, around the west side of Belmont Point. You'll wish for a four-wheel-drive jeep to navigate the road, but it's worth the trouble to get to this lovely crescent-shaped white-sand beach. The water is calm, clear and turquoise. Snorkeling is good along the close-in reef, which is visible from the beach.

Josiah's Bay can be seen from the east end of Ridge Road. Just follow Josiah's Bay Road down to the beautiful, sometimes deserted, beach. Rocks hidden just below the surface of the water makes body surfing dangerous and the waves often are too rough for novice swimmers.

Lambert Bay, on the remote eastern end of the north shore, has a striking white-sand beach lined with palms and backed by steep cliffs. The new Lambert Beach Resort is set back from the water. Its open-air restaurant serves a lavish Sunday brunch. Make a left turn off Ridge Road, near the police station in Long Look, onto Blackburn Road, then turn left again at Lambert Estate and follow the signs to the beach and resort.

Long Bay Beach East is across the Queen Elizabeth Bridge on Beef Island. Locals favor this beach because of its long stretch of sand and calm water for swimming. It's on a dirt road off Beef Island Road just past the salt flats.

Trellis Bay is home to the BVI Boardsailing School that teaches windsurfing. Steady trade winds provide near-perfect conditions for windsurfers, who hang out at the nearby bar named de Loose Mongoose. A free ferry leaves from the dock for **Marina Cay**, where you can dine at Pusser's and snorkel along the rocks off the sandy beach.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

A reader's poll conducted by highly respected *Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine* recently rated the British Virgin Islands eighth among the top 10 dive destinations in the world. The same readers' poll rated the wreck of the RMS *Rhone* the third best Caribbean wreck dive. This is

splendid news for islands that already have an international reputation as a top sailing destination.

The BVI has an abundance of dive sites, many within the Underwater National Park System, where conservation is the primary concern. Over 60 dive sites are charted and countless reefs still are unexplored. Favored spots feature thriving coral gardens, stunning canyons and intriguing tunnels and caverns teaming with underwater creatures.

Horseshoe Reef, the third largest reef in the world, stretches 11 miles from Anegada's southeastern coast. Hundreds of ships have wrecked and sunk here over the centuries and their remains provide unlimited possibilities for wreck diving. Many divers use Tortola or Virgin Gorda as a base for boat diving along the south side of the Sir Francis Drake Channel. Norman, Peter, Salt, Cooper and Ginger Islands separate the channel from the Caribbean and their underwater world features a variety of canyons, pinnacles and shallow reefs for snorkelers and divers of every skill level.

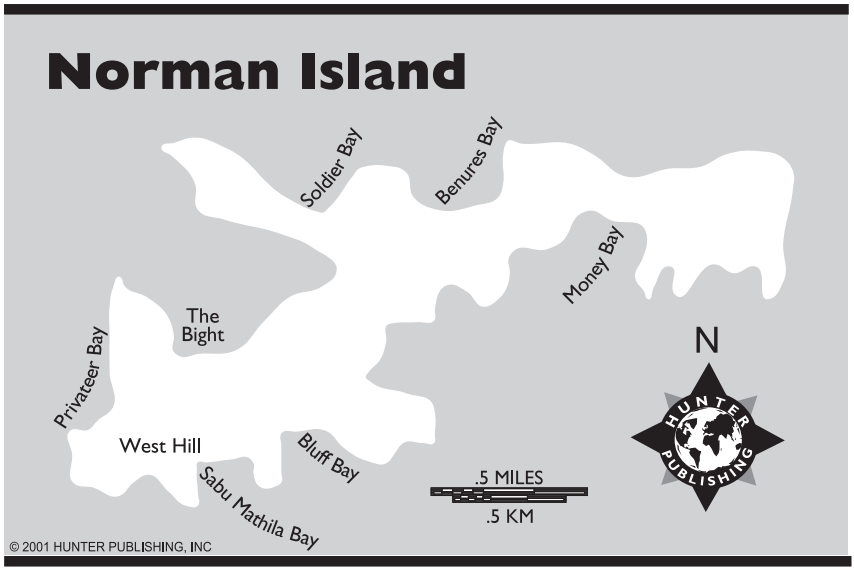
Non-divers staying on Tortola can join a resort course or go on a guided snorkeling tour of the more shallow sites. Snorkeling also is good off the beach at **Brewer's Bay**, unless winter storms are stirring up the North Atlantic and causing rough surf on the northern shore. **Marina Cay**, a five-minute ferry ride from the east end of Beef Island, also offers good snorkeling.

The Indians is a popular site near tiny Pelican Island, off the north shore of Norman Island. Snorkelers can float above the jagged pinnacles that some say resemble Indian feathers and tower 50 feet above the water's surface. Divers usually circle the rocks at depths of 30 to 50 feet, passing healthy growths of coral and sponge. A canyon known as The Sunken Indian and a formation called The Fish Bowl host abundant sea creatures.

The Caves at Norman Island are popular with snorkelers and swimmers, and divers often use the site as a rest stop between descents. Visitors come here in a never-ending search for hidden pirates' treasure. The far northern cave is the most magnificent and extends about 70 feet into the mountainside. If pirates left treasure in the BVI, this is the most likely hiding place.

Both **Sandy's Ledge** and **Angelfish Reef** are popular snorkeling and easy-dive sites off Norman Island. Sandy's beauty starts at depths of five feet, so snorkelers can easily view the coral and young fish just below the water's surface. Angelfish Reef, off the southwest end of Norman, rises to about 20 feet below the surface at some points, allowing experienced snorkelers to observe from the surface while divers go to 60-foot depths.

Norman is the largest uninhabited island in the British Virgin Islands. It is the most western of the small islands that line up across the Sir Francis Drake Channel about five miles south of Tortola. Locals call it Treasure Island because of age-old legends of buried pirates' loot on the island.



A large sheltered harbor at Norman has been called The Bight since pirate days. The western tip of this harbor, where the famous **caves** are located, is named **Treasure Point**. Once you see the three watery caves and explore their dark musky depths, you'll agree that they are an excellent place to store up earthly treasures. Lofty **Spy Glass Hill** on the island's central ridge is the perfect lookout point from which to spot enemy pirates and vulnerable Spanish galleons. If you hike up the hill, be aware that the goats are wild and known to have nasty tempers.

NORMAN ISLAND TREASURE

A letter dated 1750 refers to recovered treasure that was buried on Norman, and Robert Louis Stevenson based his famous 1883 novel, *Treasure Island*, on ruthless characters living on an island that sounds very much like Norman. In the early 1900s, a family from Tortola found a large stash of pirates' booty in one of Norman's caves.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *When you tire of looking for treasure and playing pirate, head for* ***Billy Bones Beach Bar & Grill*** *on the northeast side of The Bight. Happy hour starts at 5 pm, and you can also order lunch and dinner.* ☎ *494-4090; fax 494-0245; www.islandsonline.com/billybones.*

The pirate-style ship ***William Thornton II***, nicknamed *The Willy T*, is anchored in The Bight. This floating restaurant serves lunch and dinner, but is better known for the late-night parties that take place onboard. The original *Willy T* sank in 1995, and you can visit the 1910 Baltic Trader at the bottom of the chanNel on the east side of Great Harbour on Peter Island. If you want to spend the evening on the new *Willy T II*, take the boat shuttle that leaves Nanny Cay Marina on Tortola every evening at 5 pm and returns around 10 pm. ☎ 494-0183 or 494-2564; e-mail willy@caribsurf.com.

Spy Glass is a popular wall dive off the northeast side of Norman near Benures Bay. The top is in fairly shallow water, so snorkelers can watch schools of colorful fish that feed among the coral and sea fans. Divers go to 60 feet, where the wall meets a sand bottom and turtles, rays and tarpon feed.

If you're checking out as a new diver, chances are you'll make your first dive at **Coral Gardens** off Deadman's Bay east of the resort on Peter Island. Snorkeling is excellent when the water is calm, and divers get a look at brain, star and sheet corals growing in the garden at depths of 20 to 35 feet.

Cistern Point is an excellent snorkeling spot off the southern point of Manchioneel Bay on Cooper Island. Private yachts and dive boats often tie up here. Guests of **Cooper Island Beach Club** (☎ 800-542-4626 or 494-3721) can dinghy over to mooring on Cistern Point or go out with

Underwater Safaris Dive Shop located at the club. A boat from the dive shop at Wickham Cay usually goes to Cooper daily; you can ask to ride along and spend the day snorkeling/diving the point. ☎ 494-3235.

THE LEGEND OF RMS RHONE

On October 29, 1867 a two-year-old all-iron steamship named the RMS *Rhone* sunk off Salt Island during a late-season hurricane. Earlier in the day, the 310-foot propeller-driven vessel owned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company was safely anchored in Great Harbour on Peter Island. The RMS *Conway* was nearby, and both ships were loading for return trips. When the weather turned bad around mid-morning, Captain Robert F. Wooley, commander of the *Rhone*, dismissed the strong north winds and driving rain as an Atlantic storm, since it was well past hurricane season. The *Conway's* Captain Hammock agreed. Later, when the eye of the hurricane passed over the islands, the captains mistook the calm for a temporary lull in the storm and decided to move the *Rhone* and the *Conway* to shelter in the harbor at Road Town. The *Conway* departed quickly, but was hit by the returning storm, severely damaged, then blown onto Tortola's shore.

The *Rhone's* anchor caught on something during the hasty departure, and Captain Wooley was forced to abandon the 3,000-pound anchor and its 300-foot chain in Great Harbour. The ship was in open water without an anchor when the second half of the hurricane struck with strong south winds. Even with the steam engines at full speed, the hurricane-force winds and high waves overpowered the ship and smashed it into the western tip of Salt Island. Sharp boulders ripped a hole in the ship's iron hull. Sea water flooded in and reached the steam boilers, causing a massive explosion. The *Rhone* was blown into two main pieces, with the stern and bow sinking separately.

Residents of Salt Island rescued a few survivors, but most of the crew drowned. The British government rewarded the islanders for their heroic efforts by granting them permanent possession of their island. (It is rumored that salt from this island continues to be used at the Queen's table in England.)

Divers consider the wreck of the *Rhone* one of the most fascinating dives in the Caribbean. A movie called *The Deep* was filmed here, and underwater photographers return again and again to capture the wreck on film. The bow is mostly intact and lying on its side in about 60 feet of water. The stern is in 65 to 30 feet of water. Most divers explore the two sections separately with at least a one-hour rest between dives.

Dive Operators

The following dive shops on Tortola offer first-class PADI instruction, multi-level certification, guided dive trips and equipment rental. Most operators schedule two boat trips daily and arrange instruction courses to meet students' vacation plans. In addition, many of the dive boats will rendezvous with private yachts to pick up divers.

Expect to pay $65 for a one-tank dive, $85 for a two-tank dive, $70 for a night dive, about $60 for an introductory resort-course dive, and $385 for an open-water certification course. Snorkeling trips are priced in the $20-$30 range.

Bring your internationally accepted certification card if you want to rent equipment, get air fills or participate in guided tours designed for experienced divers. Introductory dives and resort courses are available.

NOTE: *The area code for all of the British Virgin Islands is 284.*

Baskin in the Sun was voted one of the top 10 dive operators in the Caribbean by 8,000 readers of *Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine.* They are recognized as a *DAN Partner in Dive Safety* and a five-star PADI operator with four dive boats. Their offices are at Prospect Reef Resort west of Road Town, at Soper's Hole on the West End, and at the resort on Peter Island. Gary Fisher is the general manager and Susan Thompson is the chief instructor. Contact them for reservations and information. ☎ 800-650-2084 or 494-2858; fax 494-4304; www.dive-baskin.com; e-mail reservations@dive-baskin.com.

Underwater Safaris schedules dives to all sites within a 30-minute boat ride from Road Town or Marina Cay and will plan customized trips to any site in the BVI. This operation started rendezvous diving in the BVI and still specializes in meeting divers at boats anchored in

Drake's Lake. They have a staff of 20, two shops and operate three fast custom-built dive boats. Trips leave from the Moorings dock at Wickhams Cay in Road Town and the Beach Club on Cooper Island for morning and afternoon dives. ☎ 800-537-7032 or 494-3235; fax 494-5322; www.underwatersafaris.com; e-mail info@underwatersafaris.com.

Blue Water Divers, owned by Mike Royle, has two well-equipped shops and a friendly staff of specialty-trained instructors and guides. Trips on custom-designed dive boats go out each morning. The newest boat is the fabulous 47-foot jet-driven *Cat Blue.* The staff is a relaxed group that's willing to work with divers' scheduling preferences. The introductory course allows students to practice in shallow water then participate in dives with a qualified instructor. Dive shops and boats are located on Tortola at Nanny Cay, west of Road Town (☎ 494-2847, fax 494-0198) and Hodge's Creek, east of Road Town (☎ 495-1200, fax 495-1210, www.ultimatebvi.com/bluewater; e-mail bwdbvi@surfbvi.com).

Boating & Sailing

With steady easterly trade winds, an average year-round temperature of 85°, clear-to-the-bottom turquoise seas and a lineup of pristine islands, the British Virgin Islands are considered the best cruising waters in the world. Every visitor wants to get out on the water, and since the BVI is a major yachting center, there are several ways to do it.

If you can handle a boat, consider renting a small craft for the afternoon or chartering a live-aboard for your entire stay. If you can't handle a boat, but want to learn, sign up for sailing school. If you prefer to leave the piloting to someone else, reserve a spot on one of the many full- or half-day sailing excursions.

Scheduled outings often go to secluded coves on outer islands for snorkeling, swimming and picnicking. Others make day trips to popular sites such as The Baths on Virgin Gorda. Call a few operators before you book to ask how many passengers the boat is licensed to carry and how many are expected at the time you want to go. Also, find out if snorkeling equipment and refreshments are included.

Rates for a full-day excursion with lunch run about $65 for adults and $45 for kids. Prices for half-day and sunset sails vary widely depending on the types of refreshments served and the length of the trip, so shop around before you make a reservation.

Charter rates run about $300 per day for two and $500 for four. Ask what equipment, fees and supplies are included when you're comparing prices.

While dozens of operators offer a long menu of boat-related services, the following are recommended as some of the best on Tortola.

Sailing Schools

Offshore Sailing School is run by Steve and Doris Colgate, award-wining leaders in the sailing industry, with over 90,000 satisfied graduates. Their instructors and boats meet the highest standards. The Tortola school is based at Prospect Reef Marina, west of Road Town. ☎ 800-221-4326; fax 941-454-1191; www.offshore-sailing.com; e-mail sail@offshore-sailing.com.

Full Sail Sailing School teaches everything from basics for beginners to advanced techniques for experienced sailors who want to improve their skills. The Sistership Program is designed for women who want to learn to sail in a relaxed setting during a Caribbean vacation. Full Sail and Sistership encourage students who want to become good crew members, those who hope to captain their own boat and those who are simply curious about sailing. Contact them at Seabreeze Marina on the East End, ☎ 494-0512; fax 494-0588; e-mail fullsail@surfbvi.com.

Sail Caribbean is a Cane Bay school for teens 13 to 18 years of age. Students start with windsurfing and move on to sailing two to five hours each day. Every night is spent moored at a different island. Students also have the opportunity to learn other sports such as scuba diving, water skiing and kayaking. Call for a catalog and information, ☎ 800-321-0994 or 516-754-2202; fax 516-754-3362.

Scheduled Cruises

King Charters likes to zip along, so if you want to visit at least three islands in one day, sign on for this cruise. You'll spend less than two hours traveling and more than six hours playing on the islands. The

boat offers shade, open bar, snacks and snorkeling equipment. Itineraries change, but the boat regularly leaves Nanny Cay Marina and visits Virgin Gorda, Norman Island and Jost Van Dyke, with lunch stops at one of the resorts on Peter Island, Marina Cay or Cooper Island. Call for schedules, details and reservations. ☎ 494-5820; e-mail kingchtr@caribsurf.com.

Persistence, a 31-foot Tiara operated by Captain Ezra Lettsome, offers a Monday night sunset cruise to Little Harbour on Jost Van Dyke where guests have the choice of enjoying a lobster feast at Harris' Place or a pig roast at Sidney's Peace and Love. The $30 round-trip cost includes drinks onboard, but dinner at the restaurant is extra. In addition, Captain Ezra schedules half- and full-day snorkeling trips, fishing expeditions and sightseeing tours. Contact him at West End, ☎ 495-4122 or 499-2978 (cell); fax 495-4122; e-mail ezrin@surfbvi.com.

Freedom Charters, captained by Paul Thomas, has trips from West End to The Baths on Virgin Gorda, the Cooper Island Beach Club, The Caves on Norman, as well as visits to little Sandy Cay and Green Cay. Half-day and sunset cruises are also available. Call for information about trips on these 44- and 51-foot yachts. ☎ 495-4370.

High Sea Advenures takes small groups on motor-boat excursions to "off-the-beaten-reef" sites. You can charter the whole boat for a day or join half- or full-day trip leaving from Road Town or an East End marina. Captain Roy is in charge of this fun and informative trip billed as the best educational reef tour in the islands. ☎ 495-1300; fax 495-1301; www.highseabvi.com; e-mail snorkel@highseabvi.com.

Cat PPALU is a huge catamaran that holds up to 20 people, but regularly goes out with fewer to avoid crowding. The itinerary includes a six-hour round-trip from Village Cay Marina to Anegada for a lobster lunch once a week, and shorter sails to closer islands on other days. Contact the *Cat* at ☎ 496-7716 or 494-2771.

Goddess Athena, an 84-foot ketch with wide decks that provide both sun and shade, is called "the little pirate ship." It will catch your attention when it glides by on its way to a lobster feast on Jost Van Dyke or drifts past the harbor on a moonlit evening. It's a sophisticated boat with first-class service and a playful spirit. See it at Nanny Cay. ☎ 4954-0000; fax 494-0040; www.virginathena.com; e-mail athena@surfbvi.com.

Chocolat Blanc sails out of Fat Hogs Bay on the East End for day sails that include swimming, snorkeling, lunch and drinks. This 39-foot catamaran is as sweet as its name, which translates as "white chocolate." Call to find out about its travel plan for the day you want to sail. ☎ 495-1266; fax 495-1266.

Island Girl offers a full-day cruise to Peter Island for lunch and Norman Island for snorkeling at the Indians and the Caves. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the casual party girl goes romantic, with an evening cruise that includes a three-course dinner prepared by an award-winning chef. Try to catch her at the dock on Baughers Bay. ☎ 494-1221.

Kuralu is a great boat for families. The 50-foot catamaran is ultra-stable, has 1,000 square feet of deck, a wide platform for getting into and out of the water and plenty of shade. The boat leaves daily from the West End and goes to various islands for swimming and snorkeling. Lunch, drinks and snorkeling equipment is provided. Contact owner/captain Robin Pinfold, ☎ 495-4381; www.kuralu.com; e-mail kuralucharters@caribsurf.com.

Patouche II is docked at Village Cay Marina in Road Town. The roomy 48-foot catamaran has a big deck, trampolines and floating mattresses for sunning and an awning for shade. Crew members are super-friendly and have a special talent for helping novice snorkelers enjoy the water. Half-day trips stop at two snorkeling sites, while the full-day cruises go to three sites and include lunch. ☎ 494-6300; www.patouche.com; e-mail patouche@caribsurf.com.

Tamarin II lets you sail on an ex-transAtlantic racer. The gorgeous trimaran – the largest and fastest in the Virgin Islands – is 55 feet long and 35 feet wide. She's so stable, there's a half-your-money-back seasickness guarantee. *Tamarin II* leaves Village Cay Marina in Road Town for half- and full-day cruises that include snorkeling, lunch and drinks. ☎ 495-9837; e-mail tamarin@candwbvi.net.

Crewed & Bareboat Charters

Caribbean Connections acts as a charter clearinghouse. Their office at Village Cay Marina in Road Town also handles mail, receives and sends phone messages and provides other shore services for boating visitors. ☎ 494-3623; fax 494-4744; e-mail caribcon@caribsurf.com.

Nautor Swan 43 is captained by Yachtmaster James Bridgewater, a member of the Royal Yachting Association. He will sail while you relax with a drink from the open bar, pull into a secluded cove for snorkeling or let you take the helm. Up to 10 passengers can share the boat. Contact Tikitas Yacht Charters, ☎ 494-8831 or 495-4179 (evening); 496-6652 (cell); www.islandsonline.com/tikitas.

Sunsail is a huge chartering operation that started in the Mediterranean. The base at Frenchman's Cay Marina, West End, has catamarans and monohulls in numerous sizes that rent crewed or bareboat. Contact the office for information on the many services they provide. ☎ 800-736-0828; www.sunsail.com; e-mail sunsailusa@sunsail.com.

BVI Yacht Charter rents 38- to 51-foot sailboats either crewed or bareboat. They operate from Inner Harbour Marina in Road Town. ☎ 800-648-7240 or 494-4289; fax 494-6552.

The Moorings runs a full-service yachting resort with about 200 boats, the 44-room Mariner Inn, a dockside restaurant, scuba equipment and extensive support services. Contact them at Wickhams Cay in Road Town ☎ 800-535-7289 or 494-2331; fax 494-2226.

Conch Charters, in Road Town, has a large fleet of charter boats in various sizes. They've been in business since 1986 and have a reputation for excellent boats and dedicated service. ☎ 800-521-8939 in the US, 800-463-6625 in Canada, or 494-4868 on Tortola; fax 494-5793; www.conchcharters.com; e-mail us@conchcharters.com.

Tri-Marine's *Cuan Law* is a 105-foot luxury trimaran featuring 10 double air-conditioned cabins with private baths. The vessel is outfitted with all types of watersports equipment, including scuba gear. For information about this deluxe cruise contact the office in Road Town, ☎ 800-648-3393 or 494-2490; www.diveguideint.com/cuanlaw; e-mail cuanlaw@surfbvi.com.

Water Taxis & Small Boat Rentals

Cadie's Water Taxi offers fishing/snorkeling trips as well as water-taxi service to all the islands in a small Boston Whaler or a 20-foot Mako. The BVI native is flexible, friendly and knowledgeable. ☎ 499-3853 or 496-5403 or 495-4955 (cell); e-mail watertaxi@bvimailbox.com.

Sheppard's Powerboat Rentals and Water Taxis out of Soper's Hole offers rentals and transportation to outlying islands. ☎ 495-4099.

Pleasure Boats on the beach at Cane Garden Bay rents small motor boats and offers drop-off service to three beaches on Jost Van Dyke and guided tours to Jost and Virgin Gorda. ☎ 495-9660 (office) or 495-9528 (home) or 496-7554 (cell).

Fishing

Persistence is a 31-foot Tiara with twin inboard 454 Crusader engines, spacious decks, a swim platform and an air-conditioned cabin with toilet facilities. The captain is Ezra Lettsome, a native of Tortola who has been fishing in the BVI for more than 15 years. He and his brother, Albert Stoutt, supply fish for many West End restaurants. Persistence can be chartered for eight- or four-hour fishing expeditions which include all equipment, cold drinks and lunch or snacks. The boat, which also can be chartered for sightseeing or snorkeling, is docked at the West End, ☎ 495-4122 or 499-2978 (cell); fax 495-4122; e-mail ezrin@surfbvi.com.

Lady Shaniqua is a 29-foot Phoenix captained by Larry Henley, who owns the Cane Garden Bay Superette. He's a native of Tortola, knows all the best fishing spots around the island, and is an enthusiastic guide. Call him at ☎ 495-9455.

Pelican Charters runs trips from Prospect Reef Harbour near Road Town on a 45-foot ChrisCraft Sportsfisherman, the M/V *Whopper*. Full- and half-day charters include all equipment, drinks and lunch or snacks. *The Whopper* is available for deep-sea fishing, whale watching, snorkeling or just cruising to various islands. ☎ 800-496-7386; http://prospectreef.com/water_sports/sport.htm.

Kayaking, Windsurfing, Parasailing & Other Watersports

Last Stop Sports is located in a bright red barn at Nanny Cay between Road Town and West End. The owner, Chris Guiorse, is an avid sportsman with an easy-going attitude and a knack for instructing beginners and generating excitement for watersports. The shop carries a large variety of equipment so that clients can be outfitted with exactly the right pieces to suit their skills and size. There are sit-on-top and sit-inside single and double ocean kayaks suitable for both kids and adults. Windsurfers come in many styles and sizes designed for begin-

ning, intermediate and advanced participants. Surfboards also are available. Call the office for rates and information about instruction and rentals. ☎ 495-0564; fax 494-0593, www.laststopsports.com; e-mail lssbikes@surfbvi.com.

Boardsailing BVI, owned by Jeremy Wright, rents windsurfers, boogie boards, surfboards and sea kayaks by the day or week. On-site instruction is offered and the shop will deliver equipment anywhere on Tortola. Ask about the windsurfing trips to Anegada. Offices are located at Nanny Cay on Tortola's south shore, ☎ 494-0422, and Trellis Bay on Beef Island ☎ 495-2447; fax 495-1626; www.windsurfing.vi; e-mail jwright@caribsurf.com.

Hi Ho rents and sells sea kayaks, surfboards and windsurfers. Contact them at Prospect Reef Marina near Road Town, ☎ 494-8304; fax 494-0003.

Pleasure Boats on the beach at Cane Garden Bay rents kayaks, pedal boats, boogie boards, canoes and windsurfers as well as motor boats. They also offer drop-off service to three beaches on Jost Van Dyke and guided tours to Jost and Virgin Gorda. ☎ 495-9660 (office) or 495-9528 (home) or 496-7554 (cell).

HIHO BVI

For information about the annual week-long HIHO-BVI Windsurfing Competition that attracts visitors from around the world, contact Andy Morelle by e-mail, info@hiho/bvi.com , or check out the website at www.hiho/bvi.com.

Parasailing with Jim or Tanys is an exciting way to see the BVI from an altitude of 600 feet. No experience is necessary, you won't get wet unless you want to, and kids are welcome. They will pick you up at your hotel or rendezvous with your boat. ☎ 494-4967.

Adventures on Foot

Hiking

Tortola offers ample opportunity for casual walks and rugged hikes. One of the most popular hikes is along the trails that wind through **Sage Mountain National Park**. In addition, picturesque hamlets along the coast provide ideal spots for leisurely

strolls. Beaches are popular for romantic walks at sunset and dedicated ramblers will enjoy poking around historic Road Town.

Sage Mountain National Park covers 92 acres on the rugged slopes of Tortola's highest mountain. Even non-hikers can enjoy the fantastic views from the parking lot located off Ridge Road. The vista takes in Jost Van Dyke, Sandy Cay, Tortola's north shore and St. Thomas.

The national park is open daily from dawn to dusk. For information about the park or trails, contact the BVI National Park Trust, ☎ 494-3904; fax 494-6383; e-mail bvinpt@caribsurf.com.

A large placard in the parking area illustrates the park's three interconnecting trails. The central path, known as the **Rain Forest Trail**, presents the easiest hike, while the **Mahogany Trail** leading to the top of Sage Mountain is the most difficult. The **Henry Adams Loop Trail** is short, but fairly steep, and passes through the best preserved old-growth forest.

Foliage along the well-maintained **Rain Forest Trail** is labeled. Pay special attention to the white cedar tree, which is honored as the national tree of the BVI, and the mountain guava, which is used to make the islanders' favorite Christmas-season rum drink. You may hear hermit crabs scampering in the undergrowth. Once a year, thousands of them rush down the mountain to the sea to mate and find a new shell to call home, then return to the forest.

Count on about 20 minutes to leisurely cover the entire Rain Forest Trail, which is less than a mile. When you reach a large old fig tree at the end of the path, retrace your steps and pick up the **Henry Adams Loop Trail** near the gate that crosses the entrance into the park.

The Loop Trail is a short, steep path that tends to be slippery after a rain. A 10-minute uphill hike past giant philodendron vines (aka elephant ears) will take you deep into a stand of tall old trees called bulletwoods, which supply timber that resembles mahogany.

A third path, called the **Mahogany Forest Trail,** branches off from the main Rain Forest Trail at the entrance gate. Allow about a half-hour to hike the rather short distance, because you'll be traveling a steep ascent/descent most of the way. The path can be quite slippery after a rain, so it's a good idea to wear shoes with heavy tread or hiking boots. You'll be hiking through old plantation grounds to the top of Sage Mountain, the highest point in all the US and British Virgin Islands. A sign points the way to a side trail with an observation area on the 1,710-foot-high peak.

Tennis

Prospect Reef Resort has six hard-surface courts that are available free to guests and may be reserved by the hour by non-guests for a small fee. They charge a lighting fee for anyone who plays at night. Contact the on-site pro for reservations and information about lessons. ☎ 495-3311.

Long Bay Beach Resort features a racquet club and tennis program under the direction of Peter Burwash International. There are two lighted championship courts with artificial grass plus a hard-surface court. Non-guests may make reservations for play or instruction with the on-site pro. ☎ 495-4252 or 495-4306.

Frenchman's Cay Resort allows non-guests to play on their lighted artificial-grass court that overlooks the Sir Francis Drake Channel. There's a small fee, and you can make reservations by calling the resort at ☎ 495-4844.

Adventures on Wheels

Cycling

Biking is a popular sport on Tortola and the **BVI Cycling Federation** has more than 40 members, including an impressive team of international competitors. The National Cycling Series includes approximately 10 races between February and September, and visitors to the islands may see cyclists training early each morning. If you're interested in current race information, contact the BVI Cycling Federation, ☎ 494-3567; fax 495-9546; www.bvicycling.com; e-mail info@bvicycling.com.

If you're a recreational biker you'll want to stick to leisurely rides on paved level roads along the coast. More experienced riders and adventure cyclists will enjoy rugged trails that lead to secluded beaches and steep roads that wind around scenic hills. There are many routes, including a 10-mile stretch of flat coastal road from Road Town to West End.

Mountain Biking

Last Stop Sports, in the Red Shed at Nanny Cay, rents a large selection of mountain bikes. Owner Chris Guiorse and his staff have years

of experience riding on the islands, so they are well qualified to outfit you and suggest routes that match your riding skills. The shop also offers guided rides and combination hiking-biking trips. One of the most popular is a hike on Sage Mountain followed by a downhill ride to Apple Bay on the north shore.

Multi-gear bikes rent for around $20 per day or $100 per week. Front- and full-suspension bikes cost slightly more. Helmets, locks and racks are supplied at no charge. If you plan to ride on nearby islands, your bike can go along on the ferry at no charge. ☎ 495-0564; fax 494-0593, www.laststopsports.com; e-mail laabikes@surfbvi.com.

Adventures on Horseback

One of the best ways to tour secluded beaches and remote hilltops is on horseback. **Shadow Stables**, on Ridge Road east of Skyworld Restaurant, and the **Ellis Thomas Riding School**, at the race track on Sea Cow Bay, offer rides on Sage Mountain, along the island's central ridge and down to the north-shore beaches. Contact Shadow at ☎ 494-2262; Ellis Thomas can be reached at ☎ 494-4442.

Shopping

Tortola doesn't try to compete in the duty-free shopping wars. The island offers a few good deals on items imported from the United Kingdom, but the real finds are locally made products and one-of-a-kind arts and crafts. Often, the shabbiest looking shops hold the most unusual treasures. So, overlook peeling paint and rusting metal on the exterior. Even the most meticulous shopkeepers can't keep up with the assaults of salt air, tropical storms and the Caribbean sun.

A vendor's market is set up just east of the ferry dock. You can pick up sunglasses, T-shirts, tote bags, sarongs, spices and local crafts at the open stands. Hours vary, but most merchants open around 9 am and close about 4 pm. When cruise passengers are in town and during peak tourist season, stalls open earlier and stay later. Many close for several weeks or keep shorter hours during low season. You may find some good bargains, if you visit at the right time.

SHOPPING HOURS

Unless noted otherwise, stores are open Monday-Friday, 9 am-4 pm; Saturday, 9 am-1 pm.

Road Town

Esme's Shop, in Sir Olva Georges Plaza in front of the post office across from the ferry dock, is the best place to pick up current US newspapers, books, magazines, postcards and cold drinks. ☎ 494-3961.

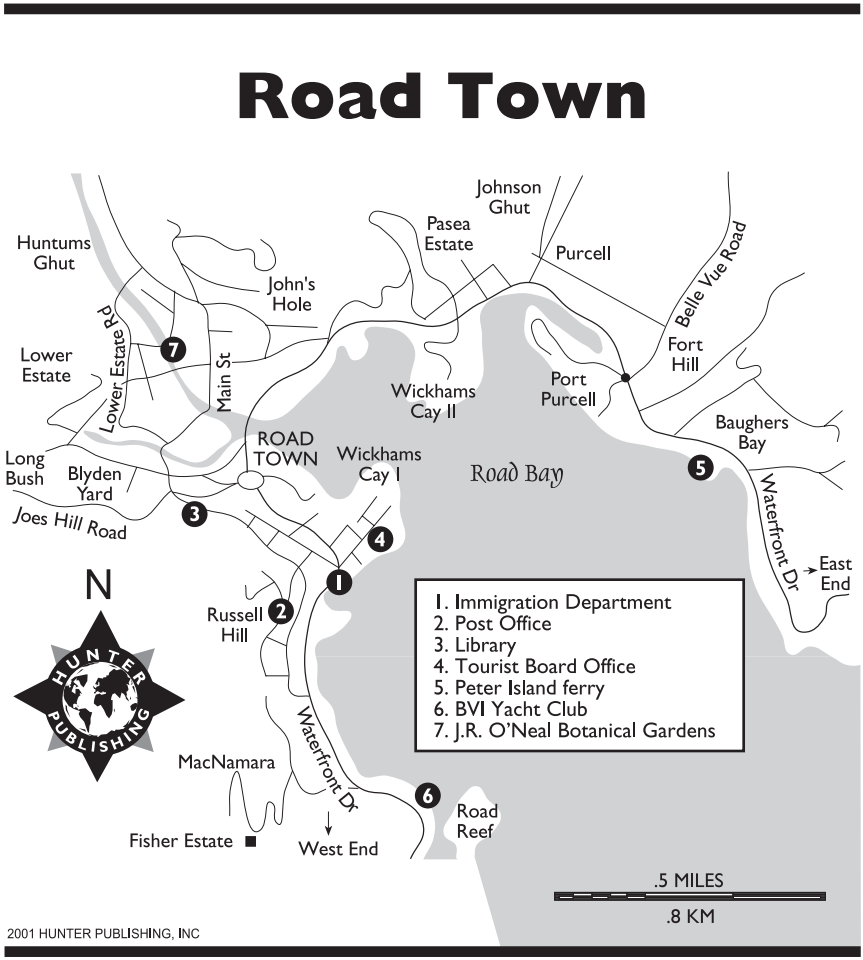
Sunny Caribbee Herb and Spice Company, on Old Main Street on a stretch of road known as "around the corner," is the best place to buy gifts and, perhaps, a little treat for yourself. You'll be tempted to spend hours in this large shop filled with fragrant herbs and spices, attractively packaged baskets of assorted beauty potions and medicinal cures, locally made ceramics and island cookbooks. ☎ 494-2178, fax 494-4039; www.sunnycaribbee.com; e-mail sunnycaribbee@surfbvi.com.

Sunny Caribbee Art Gallery is next door to the Herb and Spice Company. You'll find original paintings, prints, sculpture, pottery and handcrafted jewelry. The quality is excellent. You can arrange to have your purchases shipped home. ☎ 494-2178, fax 494-4039; www.sunnycaribbee.com; e-mail sunnycaribbee@surfbvi.com.

Sea Urchin has a shop across from the ferry dock as well as at Wickham's Cay and Soper's Hole. You'll find stylish beachwear, sandals and casual clothing in all sizes. The phone number for the waterfront store is ☎ 494-7366. For Wickham's Cay, ☎ 494-4108, and for Soper's Hole, ☎ 494-6234.

Bolo's, at the in-town traffic circle next to Bobby's Supermarket, is a popular variety store with a little bit of everything for sale. Check here if you need things such as notebooks, batteries, film, skin cream or household items. They also do one-hour film processing. ☎ 494-5760.

Latitude 18 carries embroidered and printed polo shirts and T-shirts, shorts, tops, hats and sandals for men and women. In addition, this trendy shop has a collection of dresses and sarongs for women, and the island's largest selection of Kipling bags and luggage. Look for the blue store at 116 Main Street, where the road makes a 90° turn. A second store is at Soper's Hole. ☎ 494-7807.



Flamboyance, on Waterfront Drive facing the harbor, sells a fine selection of duty-free perfumes, watches and jewelry. ☎ 494-4099; e-mail flamboyance@surfbvi.com.

Samarkand features gold and silver jewelry handcrafted by artisans Sally and Richard Bibby. The BVI-map charm makes a wonderful souvenir. Visit the shop at 94 Main Street, ☎ 494-6415 (phone/fax); e-mail samarkand@caribwave.com.

Caribbean Handprints offers fabric and clothing in lovely silk-screened designs. All clothing is handmade by local craftspeople, so each piece is a wearable souvenir of the island. Located on Main Street near the back entrance to Pusser's Company Store. ☎ 494-3717.

Pusser's Company Store opens onto Waterfront Drive across from the ferry dock and exits onto Main Street. You can walk in one door and out the other. On your way through, pick up some nautical-theme clothing and a bottle of their famous rum. ☎ 494-2467.

Soper's Hole

Soper's Hole is a marina on **Frenchman's Cay**, which is connected to Tortola near West End by a bridge. The picturesque wharf features colorful pastel shops newly designed to look like a traditional West Indian village. **Pusser's Landing** is the two-story focal point with two restaurants, a bar, an outdoor terrace overlooking the water,and a **Company Store** that carries their private-label nautical clothing and British-sailor rum. The Landing is open daily, 11 am-10 pm. ☎ 495-4554.

Ample Hamper is nearby. This luxury provisioning outlet has a great reputation with yachtsmen who can't face a cruise across the channel without a supply of vintage wine, French bread and aged cheese from the Hamper. Don't go there hungry, unless you have an ample limit on your credit card. The store is open Monday-Saturday, 8 am-6 pm, and Sunday, 8 am-1 pm. ☎ 495-4684; fax 495-4957; www.amplehamper.com; e-mail ahamper@caribsurf.com. (Stores also are located at the Inner Harbour Marina in Road Town, ☎ 494-2494, fax 494-5349; and at Hodges Creek Marina on the East End, ☎ 495-2247, fax 495-2359.)

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *If you need cash for your purchases, visit the ATM machine located at Barclay Bank on the wharf.*

Zenaida's owner, Vivian Jenik Helm, tours Africa, South America and India for batiks, handpainted fabrics, sarongs and jewelry to display and sell at the Soper's Hole shop. Browsing here is a fascinating mini-tour of exotic ports. ☎ 495-4867.

B.V.I. Apparel features cotton T-shirts printed with island designs, top-quality resort wear and exotic jewelry. ☎ 494-5511; fax 494-3867; e-mail bviapparel@aol.com.

Around the Island

Skyworld Gift Shop is below the observation deck at Skyworld Restaurant in the hills above Road Town. The best reasons to come here are the view and Jim Cullimore's cooking, but take time to poke around

the little gift shop. You'll find original island art, mini paintings, cards and pottery. Watch for signs to the restaurant/shop on Ridge Road. ☎ 494-3567.

Arawak, on the dock at Nanny Cay Marina, has a fine selection of Indonesian-style batik clothing designed in the BVI. There's also other tropical apparel, silver jewelry and T-shirts, as well as crafts from around the world. The shop's open daily, 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 494-5240.

Where to Stay

If you're not sleeping onboard ship, your lodging choice will set the tone for your entire stay in the British Virgin Islands. Tortola is an excellent home base because it has every convenience and service as well as easy access to all the other islands and cays.

There are a handful of luxurious full-service resorts, a dozen fine hotels and numerous deluxe to rustic guest houses and villas. Don't expect glitz and extravagance like that found at behemoth resorts in the USVI. Most accommodations in the BVI put more value on serenity and simplicity.

The accommodations listed below are chosen for their unique character, optimum location and essential creature comforts. Rates reflect the cost of a standard double room for two people in high season. During low-season, generally from April 15 through December 14, rates drop 25-50%. Expect to pay an additional 10% service charge and 7% tax year-round.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART	
Use the following price scale as a rate guideline for a double room per night. All prices are given in US dollars.	
$	$75 or less
$$	$76-125
$$$	$126-200
$$$$	More than $200

NOTE: *The area code on Tortola is 284.*

Rental Agencies

If you want to rent a house or private villa, contact one of the follwing agencies:

- **Areana Villas**, ☎ 494-5864; fax 494-7626; www.areanavillas.com.
- **Purple Pineapple Property Management**, ☎ 495-4848; www.purplepineapple.com.
- **Caribbean Realty LTD.**, ☎ 494-3566 or 494-6197; fax 494-5127; www.caribbeanrealtybvi.com; e-mail realty@surfbvi.com.
- **Best Vacations Imaginable**, ☎ 494-6186; fax 494-2000; e-mail bestvac@caribsurf.com.

CAMPING

Campgrounds are located on Brewers Bay. Twenty two-man tents rent for $35 per night; bare sites cost $10 per night for two. Facilities include toilets, showers, cookout areas, a casual restaurant/bar and windsurfer rentals. For reservations, contact **Brewers Bay Campground**, ☎ 494-3463.

In & Near Road Town

Prospect Reef Resort, Waterfront Drive (Box 104), Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-356-8937 (in the US), 800-463-3608 (in Canada), or 494-3311; fax 494-5595; www.prospectreef.com; e-mail reservations@prospectreef.com. 130 rooms, villas and studios. $$$.

Renovations are still taking place at this upscale resort a mile west of Road Town. Accommodations are in nine two-story pastel lodges that face the Sir Frances Drake Channel. A seawall separates the channel from two saltwater swimming pools and a sandy beach. Eight types of units are available, from garden rooms to two-bedroom villas with full kitchens.

On-site amenities include a huge freshwater swimming pool, outdoor Jacuzzi, a pitch-and-putt golf course, tennis courts, a well-equipped fitness center and a health spa with waterfront services. Elegant Callaloo Restaurant and casual Scuttlebutt Restaurant overlook the private harbor where guests leave for diving trips and day sails to

nearby islands. *Prospector*, the resort's glass-bottom boat, shuttles guests to the resort's beach facilities on neighboring islands.

All guests enjoy complimentary shuttle service to town and beaches, weekly excursions to beaches on nearby islands, a welcome reception, a children's activities program and use of the fitness center, tennis courts and non-motorized watersports equipment. An all-inclusive program includes transfers to and from the airport, all meals, unlimited beverages and all taxes and service charges.

Village Cay Resort Hotel, Village Cay Marina, PO Box 145, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 494-2771; fax 494-2773; e-mail villcay@caribsurf.com. 21 rooms. $$$.

You're within walking distance of Road Town's shops, restaurants, charter boats and ferry docks when you stay at this hotel overlooking Village Cay Marina. All rooms are air conditioned, comfortably furnished in rattan and outfitted with cable TV. Laundry facilities, a small swimming pool and a watersports center with a dive shop are on site. A waterside restaurant is open for all meals and the bar often hosts live entertainment.

Treasure Isle Hotel, Waterfront Drive, PO Box 68, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-334-2435 or 494-2501; fax 494-2507; www.treasureislehotel.com; e-mail info@treasureislehotel.com. 40 rooms and suites. $$$.

You can't miss this brightly-colored hotel perched on a landscaped hillside east of Road Town. The spacious air-conditioned rooms are equally as bright, with colorful island art on white stucco walls that contrast with tile floors. Each unit has satellite TV and a private tub/shower bathroom. Guests enjoy a freshwater swimming pool, complimentary sailing and transportation to various beaches. An on-site dive shop is convenient for those who want to scuba or snorkel. The open-air Lime and Mango Restaurant and Spy Glass bar are popular gathering spots for locals and visitors to the island. (See *Where to Eat.)*

Fort Burt, Waterfront Drive, PO Box 3380, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 494-2587; fax 494-2002; e-mail fortburt@caribsurf.com. 19 rooms and suites. $$

Dutch settlers built Fort Burt in the 1600s to defend the island against foreign armies and pirates. Today it's a modern hotel conveniently located near the west side of Road Town, across the south-coast road from the BVI Yacht Club and within walking distance of the ferry dock and town attractions. Recently renovated rooms and suites are air con-

ditioned, comfortably furnished in rattan and feature cable TV, small refrigerators and private balconies with views of the water. If you don't splurge on one of the two deluxe suites with a private pool, you can swim in the lovely hotel pool, which overlooks the harbor. (See *Independent Touring* and *Where to Eat* for more information about the grounds and restaurant.)

North Shore

Sebastian's On The Beach Hotel and Villas, Little Apple Bay, PO Box 441, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-336-4870 or 495-4212; fax 495-4466; www.britishvirginislands.com/sebastians; e-mail info@sebastiansbvi.com. 26 rooms ($$$), 8 villas ($$$$).

Kick off your shoes and enjoy this friendly barefoot beach hotel on shady Little Apple Bay. All rooms are cozy, nicely decorated and outfitted with a small refrigerator and private bath. Oceanview rooms have private balconies or patios, while garden units open onto a lushly landscaped courtyard. Rooms are situated in three buildings and vary significantly, so ask about noise, views and location in relation to the water and road when you make a reservation.

New seaside villas offer more room and luxury. Each one- and two-bedroom air-conditioned unit has a kitchen and is equipped with ceiling fan, TV, VCR, and Internet access. The living area has a sleeper-sofa and opens onto a large private balcony. Deluxe villas have oversized bathrooms with whirlpool tubs.

Surfers will be happy with the winter-time waves that break on shore at Apple Bay, but some areas are rocky, so guests often visit other beaches for swimming. The seaside open-air restaurant serves award-winning dishes featuring fresh seafood and vegetarian cuisine. On Sundays, a fungi band plays on the beach, attracting a dancing crowd.

Sugar Mill Hotel, Little Apple Bay, PO Box 425, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-462-8834 or 495-4355; fax 495-4696; e-mail sugmill@surfbvi.com. 21 rooms and suites, 1 villa. $$$$.

This elegant hideaway is built around the ruins of a 17th-century sugar mill and rum distillery nestled in a garden overlooking the sea. It is superbly serene. The perfect retreat. Owners Jeff and Jinx Morgan are writers who specialize in travel and food, so they are well acquainted with the demands and expectations of vacationers. Spacious rooms and suites have one king or two twin beds, a private balcony and kitchenettes with refrigerators. All have ceiling fans, and some are air

conditioned. The air-conditioned two-bedroom villa has a full kitchen, cable TV with VCR and sea views. Guests often gather around the shady circular swimming pool during the day and at the romantic gazebos beside the bar in the evening before dinner in the fabulous Sugar Mill Restaurant. Lunch is served at Islands Restaurant on the beach. (See *Where to Eat* for a full review.)

Long Bay Beach Resort, Long Bay Beach, PO Box 433, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-729-9599 or 495-4252; fax 495-4677; www.longbay.com; e-mail reservations@longbay.com. 122 rooms and villas. $$$$.

The mile-long white-sand beach on Long Bay is one of the prettiest on Tortola, and this full-service resort spread across 52 acres provides everything you need to enjoy it. Recently updated rooms are tucked into the lush tropical vegetation that grows up the hillsides. Each spacious unit is air conditioned and outfitted with a ceiling fan, small refrigerator and cable TV. All have large balconies or patios with dramatic ocean views.

Beachfront cabanas that are built on stilts have extra luxuries such as VCRs, hammocks on the deck and deluxe bathrooms. Larger family-style rooms have sitting areas, oversized balconies, separate shower rooms and walk-in closets. Luxurious homes and apartments with up to five bedrooms are available, also. Guests in all accommodations may use two freshwater swimming pools with a swim-up bar and waterslide, the fitness center, tennis courts with complimentary clinics and a nine-hole pitch-and-putt golf course. Surfboards, sea kayaks and snorkeling equipment may be rented on the beach. The Garden Restaurant and the Beach Café provide meals throughout the day, and bands perform a couple of nights each week.

Lambert Beach Hotel, PO Box 534, East End, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-225-4255 or 495-2877; fax 495-2876; e-mail lambert@caribsurf.com. 38 rooms, suites and villas. $$.

Lambert Beach Resort is one of Tortola's newest resorts, and is a real bargain. The quiet retreat is located on eight acres along a half-mile-long white-sand beach at the bottom of a steep road that keeps curious explorers away. Although the resort doesn't attempt to be plush or extravagant, the comfortable air-conditioned Mediterranean-style bungalows have an air of sophistication. Each unit has a ceiling fan, hair dryer and wet bar. Guests enjoy free use of snorkeling equipment, boogie boards and kayaks on the beach. In addition, there's a tennis court, a huge swimming pool with a swim-up bar and a clubhouse with satellite TV. Turtles, an open-air beachfront restaurant, serves Caribbean-

inspired meals all day; the Sunday buffet brunch, served 11:30 am-2:30 pm, is a spectacular all-you-can-eat spread with live entertainment by a local band.

South Shore

Frenchman's Cay Resort, Frenchman's Cay, PO Box 1054, West End, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-235-4077 (in the US), 800-463-0199 (Canada) or 495-4844; fax 495-4056; http://frenchmans.com; e-mail fmchotel@caribsurf.com. 9 villas. $$$$.

Villas at this lovely hotel sit on a 12-acre estate across the water passage from Soper's Hole on the west end of Tortola. Guests enjoy a white-sand beach with hammocks, swimming pool, tennis court, watersports center and the Clubhouse Restaurant (see *Where to Eat*, below). One- and two-bedroom units have a private terrace, full kitchen, living area and a dining room. The two-bedroom villas also have two bathrooms. Water borders three sides of the resort, so the villas are nicely cooled by sea breezes. Since no more than 40 guests can be accommodated in the nine villas, everyone has plenty of space and privacy.

Jolly Roger Inn, PO Box 21, West End, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 495-4559; fax 495-4184; e-mail louis@caribsurf.com. 6 rooms. $.

This is the best place to stay if you're on a tight budget. During the summer you can get a room with a shared bath for around $60, and it's not much more in the winter, even with a private bathroom. Located on the water's edge at Soper's Hole near the West End ferry dock, the inn is almost incidental to the well-known restaurant and bar. It's a favorite with the boating community and is known to serve great food and provide boisterous good times. Guest rooms on the second floor share a bathroom and one double room on the first floor has its own bath. Each room is basic, but clean and comfortable. The staff is friendly and helpful, making sure all guests quickly feel at home.

Nanny Cay Resort and Marina, PO Box 281, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. ☎ 800-74-CHARMS (in the US) or 494-2512; fax 494-3288; e-mail mpoulter@caribsurf.com. 42 rooms. $$$.

If you like to stay busy during vacations, this hotel between West End and Road Town is right for you. Scuba diving, sailing lessons, boat charters, watersports equipment and bikes all are available on the dock at Nanny Cay. You can stay in one of the air-conditioned rooms overlooking the marina and schedule a different activity every day.

Each unit has a kitchenette – excellent for keeping picnic supplies handy – and there's an on-site swimming pool and tennis court in case you have a free block of time. Peg Leg Landing Restaurant, Plaza Café, several shops and a supermarket also are in the marina area.

Where to Eat

The dilemma on Tortola is whether to eat West Indian rotis on a sandy patio at the water's edge or enjoy international cuisine at a romantic little restaurant tucked into the hills overlooking the Sir Francis Drake Channel. There are more than 60 restaurants on the small island and no fast-food chains. Every establishment has its own personality and each chef takes great pride in preparing competition-level meals. In fact, Tortola is home to several local and international award-winning cooks.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Restaurants often change their hours during low season, and some close for several weeks during the summer. Call ahead to avoid disappointment.*

Don't make the mistake of shunning a restaurant because of its outside appearance. As with the shops, sometimes the best offerings are hidden behind the shabbiest exteriors. If you see local people eating there, give it a try. Tortola also has a fine selection of upscale restaurants with elegant dining rooms and exquisite cuisine. In the mid-range, there are lovely family-owned cafés that serve Caribbean specialties made with fresh produce and mysterious seasonings.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and tip. There's no tax on meals.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-20
$$$	$21-35
$$$$	More than $35

NOTE: *The area code for Tortola is 284.*

The following restaurants are recommended for their excellent food, charming ambience and friendly service. This listing does not attempt to include every worthy eatery, but aims to present an overview of diverse possibilities.

In & Near Road Town

C & F Restaurant, Purcell Estate, ☎ 494-4941. Caribbean. $$. Open nightly, 6:30 pm-11 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended in high season.

Chef Clarence and his wife, Florence, run this popular restaurant that draws a crowd of loyal clients with specialties such as barbecued ribs, seafood curry and grilled fish. Try the conch with lime butter sauce. It's excellent. Homemade cakes and pies make up the dessert offerings. C & F is tricky to find, so call for detailed directions or consider taking a cab. It's off Purcell Road, which is just past the Riteway store near the Moorings, east of Road Town.

Cafesito, Wickham's Cay, ☎ 494-7412. West Indian/International. $$. Daily, 10:30 am-11 pm. Credit cards accepted.

Start with sangria or a frozen tropical drink at this open-air café in Romasco Place pavilion facing Waterfront Drive. The cool drink will go well with Spanish tapas. Then move on to coconut shrimp or blackened fish. Everything is good, even the pasta dishes. Live music plays on Wednesday and Saturday nights. Happy hour runs daily from 4:30 pm until 6:30 pm.

Capriccio Di Mare, Waterfront Drive, ☎ 494-5369. Italian. $$. Open daily, 8 am-10:30 am and 11 am-9 pm.

This will become your favorite restaurant after one meal. It's owned by Davide and Cele Pugliese, owners of the elegant Brandywine Bay Restaurant, who know Italian food and the restaurant business well. While you may not be able to afford Brandywine on a daily basis, Capriccio fits almost anyone's budget. The pizza is excellent, the pasta dishes divine. The focaccia sandwiches are perfect for lunch. Specials change daily and are always a good choice. In the morning, start with an authentic cappuccino. In the evening, order a Bellini made with fresh peaches. You sit outside on a patio facing the ferry dock and harbor, so the atmosphere is super-casual, but the food is as good it gets anywhere on the island.

Midtown Restaurant, Main Street, ☎ 494-2764. Caribbean. $. Monday-Saturday, 7 am-10 pm; Sunday, 7 am-5 pm.

This restaurant isn't for everyone, but if you want to try down-home cooking island-style, come on in. Gloria is the owner/cook who stirs up *souse* (pig's feet stew), cow-foot soup and curried mutton. She also makes a tasty johnnycake and the conch fritters are excellent.

Pusser's Pub, Waterfront Drive, ☎ 494-3897. English pub food. $/$$. Open daily, 11 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

You can't miss the landmark building facing the ferry dock. It's a convenient and dependable place for a meal when you're in town or waiting for the ferry. The menu includes giant burgers, deli sandwiches and meat pies. English ale is available on draft and the bartender whips up wonderful drinks using Pusser's rum.

Roti Palace, Abbot Road on Russel Hill, ☎ 494-4196. Indian. $. Monday-Saturday, 7 am-9:30 pm.

First-time visitors to the islands quickly learn that a roti is a wrap, similar to a Mexican burrito, that was introduced to the Caribbean by India. Flat, pan-fried bread is wrapped around various fillings, usually some type of meat, often curried. At Roti Palace, fillings include vegetable, seafood, beef, chicken and goat. Some are served with a side condiment, such as lime-butter sauce or mango chutney. Most customers pick up their rotis to go, but the tiny restaurant has a few tables and chairs for communal dining in. To get there, walk north on Main Street with the harbor to your right, round the corner, then take the next left onto Abbot, which runs below the big purple Bougainvillea Clinic. Roti Palace is tucked into a small building on the left.

Fish Trap, Wickham's Cay I, ☎ 494-3626. Seafood. $$$. Monday-Friday, 11:30 am-3 pm and 6:30 pm-11 pm; Saturday, 11:30 am-2 pm and 6:30 pm-11 pm; Sunday, 6:30 pm-11 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

Sit on a pretty terrace next to Village Cay Marina, behind Scotia Bank, and enjoy excellent fresh fish, local lobster and conch fritters. On Sunday evenings, the menu also includes perfectly-cooked prime rib. If you stop by at lunchtime, you'll have a choice of burgers, salads, burritos and sandwiches.

Village Cay Restaurant, Village Cay Marina, ☎ 494-2771. International. $$$. Daily, 7:30 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended at dinner.

Drop by this dockside bar on Friday afternoon around 4 pm to watch the fashion show presented by local boutiques and diving shops. Then stay for dinner in the open-air restaurant where the aroma of grilled steaks and seafood mix with the clean salt air. Paradise doesn't get any better than this.

Lime 'N' Mango, Treasure Isle Hotel/Waterfront Drive, ☎ 494-2501. Mexican/Caribbean. $$$. Daily, 7 am-11 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

You can get surprisingly authentic Mexican dishes such as quesadillas and fajitas at this trendy spot in the Treasure Isle Hotel. Other menu standouts include coconut shrimp and pepper steak. On Saturday nights, a steel pan band plays during the Caribbean barbecue. The restaurant is set in an open garden with dazzling views of the Sir Frances Drake Channel.

Fort Burt Chop and Lobster House, Fort Burt Hotel/Waterfront Drive, ☎ 494-2587. International. $$$. Restaurant is open daily, 8 am-10 am, noon-3 pm and 6 pm-11 pm; bar is open daily, 10 am-midnight. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

Regulars gather at the bar, which has a stunning view of Road Town Harbor, for drinks and chat about business deals and sailing feats. Dinner is by candlelight in the newly renovated dining room and features a menu developed by Chef Guido Lucchesi, an award-winning international restaurateur. Highlights include grilled steaks, chops, fish and lobster. Lunch is more casual with sandwiches, soups and salads on the menu. The food is good, but the old-world atmosphere and dazzling views are the big draw. (See *Independent Touring*, page 226, and *Where to Stay*, page 251 for more information about the fort.)

Callaloo on the Reef, Prospect Reef Resort/Waterfront Drive, ☎ 494-3311. International. $$$$. Open daily from 7 am until the last guest leaves. Credit cards accepted. Reservations required for dinner.

This elegant and romantic restaurant with award-winning chefs overlooks a small harbor on the Sir Frances Drake Channel just west of Road Town. In the evenings, a *prix-fixe* dinner in the $30 range offers a gourmet specialty with a Caribbean twist. An à la carte menu features creative soups and imaginative appetizers. Tempting main courses include rum-glazed shrimp sautéed with mango and marinated

charbroiled pork chops served with star apple reduction. Don't pass up the crème brûlée flaming with aged rum for dessert.

Scuttlebutt Pub, Prospect Reef Resort, ☎ 494-3311. Casual American. $/$$. Daily, 7 am-late. Credit cards accepted.

Scuttlebutt is a laid-back harborside pub set below the elegant Callaloo Restaurant. It's a favorite gathering spot for divers, sailors and resort guests who swap sea stories while they enjoy a drink or light meal. The menu includes burgers, sandwiches, rotis, fried chicken, coconut snapper in beer batter and spicy breaded shrimp. Service is friendly and the bartenders make superb icy concoctions to take the heat out of a Caribbean afternoon. The pub's name comes from an old nautical term that referred to the rum barrel on a ship. During long sea trips, sailors would gather around the scuttlebutt to enjoy a drink, exchange gossip and tell tall tales.

Skyworld, Ridge Road, in the hills above Road Town, ☎ 494-3567; fax 495-9546. Continental/Caribbean. $$$. Open daily, 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 5 pm-8 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations required.

Skyworld sits on one of Tortola's highest peaks, offering a fantastic 360° view from the observation deck. Plan to arrive well before sunset so you can enjoy the panorama from 1,337 feet above Road Town Harbour. Then, settle inside the charming circular dining room for excellent drinks, food and service. Jim Cullimore, the owner and chef, is a fabulously friendly guy and a shameless perfectionist – two desirable traits in a restaurateur. Proper dinner attire is required in the fancier section of the restaurant (collared shirts and long pants for men, dresses or long pants for women) but, if you arrive in shorts, you can order from the same menu and sit in the more casual area. Enjoy one of Jim's specialty drinks from the bar while you watch the sun set beyond the large windows. Then select from the superb menu that includes creative dishes such as conch-stuffed mushrooms, grilled seafood with ginger-butter sauce, chicken breast with mango-hazelnut stuffing and a Key lime pie that is reportedly the best in the BVI.

BIKING TREAT

If you're interested in biking, try to catch Jim when he's not busy to ask about cycling on the island. He's a top-ranked biker on the Caribbean racing circuit, and his son, Paul, is a champion downhill racer in the junior division.

East End

Brandywine Bay Restaurant, Blackburn Highway/Brandy Wine Bay, ☎ 495-2301. Northern Italian. $$$$. Monday-Saturday, 6:30 pm-9 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations required.

When visitors ask a resident where to go for a romantic dinner, Brandywine will often be the answer. Davide and Cele Pugliese have built an enviable reputation for themselves and their restaurant. Chef Davide is from the Tuscany region of Italy and grew up among excellent cooks. His Australian wife, Cele, is the restaurant's gracious hostess and manager. Together they provide exquisite food in a quixotic setting. The menu changes daily, but always features an ample choice of carefully prepared and artistically seasoned appetizers, entrées and desserts. Main courses center around grilled specialties such as beef, portobello mushrooms, veal chops and fresh fish. Do not miss the homemade tiramisu for dessert. Follow Waterfront Drive east out of Road Town and watch for signs on the south-shore road indicating the turnoff at Brandy Wine Bay, about three miles outside town.

The Last Resort, Trellis Bay/Bellamy Cay, ☎ 495-2520. English. $$/$$$. Daily, 12:30 pm-2 pm (lunch), 5 pm-7 pm (happy hour), 7:30 pm (dinner), 9:30 pm (show); the bar is open all day. Credit cards accepted. Reservations strongly suggested.

Book your front-row table well in advance so you won't miss a moment of Tony Snell's nautical entertainment. The Englishman is a legend and every BVI visitor should spend an evening at his after-dinner comedy show. Use the hotline on shore to request a five-minute free ferry ride from Trellis Bay to tiny Bellamy Cay, where you enjoy a huge buffet feast before the show. If you can't make the dinner show, zip over for lunch or just a drink at the bar.

North Shore

Friday Night Fish Fry, Under the Banyan tree in Apple Bay. No phone. Seafood. $/$$. Friday only, 6 pm until "whenever."

Sylvia Lettsome and her family have been cooking fish, mixing drinks and entertaining guests on Friday nights under the big banyan trees on the main road at the bottom of Zion Hill in Apple Bay for 20 years. A lobster dinner costs around $15, perhaps $20 if it's really big. A real bargain either way.

Guests also can choose fried or steamed freshly caught fish, barbecued ribs or fried chicken ($8 to $12). Everything comes with home-made side dishes such as peas 'n rice, potato salad, corn on the cob and johnnycakes. The whole Lettsome family pitches in, with Sylvia working the open-drum grill, daughters and sisters helping out in the "kitchen tree," son Albert mixing drinks in the "bar tree," and son Ezra acting as DJ when there isn't a band. It's great fun and a terrific way to mingle with the friendly community while enjoying delicious island food.

Palm's Delight, Carrot Bay, ☎ 495-4863. West Indian. $$. Monday-Saturday, 6 pm-10 pm.

You're going to love Iona Dawson and her down-home cooking. She used to work at Long Bay and Skyworld Restaurants, but had a dream of opening her own business. So, in 1994, she and her son, Tony, started cooking, and fans haven't let them stop. The menu includes sautéed shrimp, grilled fish, barbecue and rotis. One of her best creations is the chicken breast in ginger-wine sauce. In addition to excellent meals, the waterside restaurant serves up fantastic views and friendly ambience. Most of the staff are family members, and many customers are friends – or they will be before they leave. Look for Palm's Delight under the swaying palms across from two churches in the center of Carrot Bay.

Mrs. Scatliffe's, Carrot Bay, ☎ 495-4556. West Indian. $$. Monday-Friday, 12 pm-2 pm. Daily, 7 pm-8:30 pm. Reservations required by 5:30 pm for dinner.

You may think you're having dinner at your aunt's house when you dine on Mrs. Scatliffe's upstairs patio. The food will be home-cooked, mostly home-grown and delicious. After dinner, you may be entertained by musically-talented family members. Don't show up without a reservation. Mrs. Scatliffe cooks a set-priced meal only for those who call by 5:30 in the afternoon. Look for her hand-lettered sign across from the elementary school in Carrot Bay.

North Shore Shell Museum, Carrot Bay, ☎ 495-4714. West Indian. $$. Daily, 8 am-10 am; 10:30 am-3 pm; and 6 pm-9 pm. Reservations recommended for dinner.

Egbert and Mona Donovan run the most unusual restaurant on the island. The open-air building has a restaurant and bar on the upper level and an odd but interesting museum on the lower level.

A dirt path meanders through tables displaying coral, shells and other beach findings. Most of the exhibits are for sale. The restaurant fea-

tures grilled fresh lobster and fish, seafood with various sauces, cracked conch and chicken curry. All entrées come with island-style side dishes such as rice and beans. Happy hour, 4 pm-6 pm daily, is a great time to browse through the museum.

Garden Restaurant, Long Bay Beach Resort, ☎ 495-4252. Continental. $$$. Daily, 6:30 pm-9:30 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Dress up a little for dinner in this casually elegant open-air restaurant. Candle light. Gentle breezes. Excellent cuisine. Ah, dinner in paradise. The menu changes daily but features entrées such as breast of duck in a delicate papaya sauce preceded by a freshly tossed and perfectly dressed Caesar salad and followed by a rum-laced dessert.

If you want to dine more casually, opt for a meal at the resort's moderately-priced **Beach Café** set in a seaside sugar mill. On Tuesday nights, the café hosts a Taste of Tortola buffet, and on Friday nights there's a West Indian buffet. Breakfast and lunch also are available daily beginning at 7 am.

Sugar Mill Restaurant, Apple Bay/Sugar Mill Hotel, ☎ 495-4355. International. $$/$$$$. Daily, 8 am-10 am; 12 pm-2 pm; and 7 pm-9 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations required for dinner.

This romantic restaurant, set in a beautifully restored 340-year-old sugar mill, has a long list of admirable accolades, and owners Jeff and Jinx Morgan recently published a cookbook full of recipes. Check with your local bookstore or order *The Sugar Mill Caribbean Cookbook* (Harvard Common Press) through the restaurant's website at www.sugarmillhotel/restaurant. The menu changes daily, so you can return several times to try different dishes. Favorites include wild mushroom bisque, curried banana soup, scallops in puff pastry with roasted red pepper sauce, Jamaican jerk pork roast and desserts such as banana-almond mousse. A lovely gazebo bar overlooks the bay and the candle-lit main restaurant is decorated with Caribbean art and lush plants. During the day, breakfast and lunch are served in the beachfront **Islands Restaurant**. The innovative menu there features rum-laced French toast and piña colada pancakes for breakfast, with salt fish fritters or vegetarian pita sandwiches for lunch.

Stanley's Welcome Bar, Cane Garden Bay, ☎ 495-9424. Casual grill. $/$$. Daily, 10 am-10 pm.

Stanley's was one of the first bar/cafés built on the fabulous stretch of sand that lines Cane Garden Bay and has built up a loyal following

over the years. Drop in for one of the best burgers in the BVI. Other choices include fried chicken, baby back ribs, fresh fish and pasta. A band often plays on weekend nights, when the music can be heard all along the beach.

Myett's, Cane Garden Bay, ☎ 495-9649. International. $$$. Daily, 11 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested for dinner.

Myett's tropical garden is hidden among seagrape trees and palms, but when you venture into the lush growth, you find a gorgeous restaurant pavilion and terrace. Lunch and dinner are served daily. The menu features fresh seafood, chicken, veggies, and steaks cooked on an outdoor grill. A luscious aroma drifts through the trees and out onto the sandy beach, drawing a hungry crowd. A live band plays on weekends and Monday evenings. Look for Sandman, the owner, at the bar, whipping up frozen treats with the local Callwood rum.

West End

The Jolly Roger, Soper's Hole, ☎ 495-4559. West Indian/International. $$$. Daily, 8 am-midnight (closed in September). Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested for dinner.

This popular sailor hangout overlooks the passage between the tiny island of Frenchman's Cay and the main island of Tortola, near the West End ferry dock. It's a great place for boat-watching. On weekends the nautical restaurant managed by Lou Schwartz hosts a barbecue with live music for dancing. A regular menu includes well-prepared and reasonably priced meals, with blackboard specials in the evening. Fish chowder, conch fritters, grilled seafood and inventive pizzas top the crowd-pleaser list.

The Clubhouse Restaurant, Frenchman's Cay Hotel, ☎ 495-4844. Caribbean/Continental. $$$-$$$$. Open Tuesday-Saturday, 8 am-10:30 am, 11:30 am-2:30 pm and 6:30 pm-9 pm; Sunday, noon-3 pm and 6:30 pm-9 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested for brunch and dinner.

An added perk when you dine at this hotel restaurant overlooking the Sir Francis Drake Channel is complimentary use of the beach, pool and tennis court. The regular menu features fresh seafood specialties such as escargot and Caribbean lobster; the Sunday barbecue buffet is especially popular. West Indian dishes and the signature chocolate mousse are exceptional.

Nightlife

Pick up the current issue of ***Limin' Times*** (☎ 494-2413; www.bviwelcome.com) at most any hotel to find out what entertainment is available for the week. Bands and solo musicians play at many restaurants and hotels on weekend nights and Sunday afternoons, and you stand a good chance of seeing live entertainment somewhere on the island any evening of the week.

LIMIN'

The *Dictionary of the Virgin Islands English Creole* defines the verb "to lime," as meaning *to hang around idly* or *to go out on the town*. Be sure to do a lot of limin' while you're in the BVI.

Try to see the **Heritage Dancers**, a group that performs traditional dances celebrating historical island events, such as emancipation. They dance at hotels on a rotating schedule, so ask at the activities desk of your hotel or check *Limin' Times* for performance dates and locations.

Bomba's Beach Shack is best known for its all-night full-moon parties, where the house punch is spiked with a "secret" ingredient rumored to be hallucinogenic mushrooms. But, a full moon and weird punch isn't required to make Bomba's a truly unique experience. The tumble-down shanty owned by Bomba Smith is open every day from 10 am to midnight, and top-notch bands play during the all-you-can-eat barbecue dinner on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. The Shack is on the beach at Apple Bay. ☎ 495-4148.

Quito's Gazebo serves as the stage for local recording star Quito Rymer and his band, The Edge. Call ahead or check *Limin Times* for scheduled performances, but you'll find Quito sings solo or with his group at this casual bar on most weekend nights. Other local musicians perform at the Gazebo at various times, also. If you're looking for a good meal, try the Friday night fish fry or Sunday evening Caribbean buffet. The food is good, the atmosphere is jovial, and you can't beat the entertainment. Quito's is on the beach at Cane Garden Bay. ☎ 495-4837.

Jolly Roger offers a variety of bands and music styles on Friday and Saturday nights beginning around 8 pm. Drop by for dinner, then stay

to enjoy the music. The restaurant/bar/inn is near the ferry dock at West End. ☎ 495-4559.

Pusser's Landing has a pig roast with live entertainment starting at 6 pm on Fridays. Local bands often play on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday nights as well. The bar turns out excellent drinks, such as their famous Painkiller, made with Pusser's rum. Happy hour runs every afternoon from 5 pm until 7 pm, and Thursday is nickel beer night 8 pm-10 pm. Pusser's is located across Waterfront Drive from the ferry dock in Road Town. ☎ 494-4554.

The Last Resort is known for the after-dinner entertainment of Tony Snell. He dishes out a cabaret-style comedy show geared toward the yachting crowd every night. Happy hour starts at 5 pm, a buffet dinner begins at 7:30 pm, and Tony takes center stage at 9:30 pm. A free ferry provides transportation from the dock at Trellis Bay on Beef Island to The Last Resort on tiny Bellamy Cay. Call well ahead for a front-row table. ☎ 495-2520.

Island Facts & Numbers

AIRPORT: Beef Island International Airport, ☎ 494-3701 or 495-2525.

AREA CODE: The area code for all British Virgin Islands is 284. You may dial direct from the States.

BANKS, ATMs: Most banks are open Monday-Thursday, 7:45 am-4:30 pm, and Friday from 7:45 am until 5:30 pm. ATMs are available 24 hours a day at the following banks: **Banco Popular**, Main St Box 67, Road Town, ☎ 494-2117; **Barclays Bank PLC**, Wickhams Cay 1, Box 70, Road Town, ☎ 494-2171; **Barclays Bank**, Yacht Harbour, Virgin Gorda, ☎ 495-5271; **Chase Manhattan Bank**, Wickhams Cay 1, Box 435, Road Town, ☎ 494-2662.

DRIVING: Traffic stays to the left. The speed limit is 20 mph in towns and 35 mph in the countryside.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts, 60 cycles, as on the US mainland.

EMERGENCIES: Ambulance, ☎ 999; Fire Department, ☎ 999; Police, ☎ 999; Virgin Island Search and Rescue, ☎ 494-4357; Hospital, ☎ 494-3497; Hyperbaric chamber for divers (St. Thomas), ☎ 340-776-2686.

GOVERNMENT: The British Virgin Islands are a Crown Colony with a governor appointed by England.

MONEY: The US dollar is the legal currency throughout the Virgin Islands. Travelers' checks and major credit cards are acceptable at most locations, but always carry some cash for smaller establishments.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES: ***The BVI Beacon*** is published on Thursdays. ***The Island Sun*** is a free publication that comes out on Fridays and is available at hotels and other tourist-oriented locations throughout the island.

The BVI WELCOME Tourist Guide and ***Limin' Times*** are free publications that are available island-wide at the airports, ferry docks, hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions.

POST OFFICE: The main post office is in Road Town, Tortola. Branches are found at Cane Garden Bay, Carrot Bay, East End and West End on Tortola, and in Spanish Town on Virgin Gorda.

TAXES: There is no sales tax in the BVI. The Departure Tax is $10 if leaving by airplane and $5 if by boat. A 7% government tax is added to all hotel bills.

TOURIST INFORMATION: In the US, information is available from the **British Virgin Islands Tourist Board**, 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, ☎ 800-835-8530 or 212-696-0400; fax 212-949-8254; also 1804 Union Street, San Francisco, CA 94123, ☎ 415-775-0344; fax 415-775-2554.

In the British Virgin Islands, contact the **British Virgin Island Tourist Board** at PO Box 134, Road Town, Tortola, BVI, ☎ 284-494-3134: fax 284-494-3866; e-mail bvitourb@surfbvi.com.

You also may get information from **The Caribbean Information Office**, ☎ 800-621-1270 in the US and ☎ 847-699-7570 outside the US; fax 847-699-7583.

In the UK, contact **The BVI Tourist Board,** FCB Travel/Marketing, 54 Baker Street, London WIM 1DJ, ☎ 0171-240-4259; fax 0171-240-4270; e-mail champton@fcb.com.

WEBSITES: www.britishvirginislands.com (for ferry schedules and other access information); http://ultimatebvi.com; www.islandsonline.com; www.virtualvoyages.com/carib/bvi; www.b-v-i.com.

WEDDINGS: Apply for a marriage license at the Registrar's Office, Main Street, Road Town, ☎ 494-3701. Take note:

- If you've never been married, you need only a passport. However, if either person has been married they must provide the original divorce decree or death certificate for their

former spouse. If these documents are not in English, a certified translation must be included.

- A three-day residency requirement must pass from the time you submit your documents to the day you get married.
- A $110 marriage tax is collected by the government and it, along with your passports and divorce decree (if applicable), is submitted to the Attorney General.
- The Registrar charges $100 to perform the ceremony, which may be held at a location of your choice.
- You must appoint two witnesses to sign for you, and they must be present at the wedding.

Weddings are made simple by contacting a wedding service at your hotel or elsewhere on the island. One to consider is **Infinity**, 352 Waterfront Drive, Road Town; ☎ 492-2363; fax 494-4863.

Virgin Gorda

Overview

Virgin Gorda is a long, skinny island with a fat middle. From a distance, the mountain dominating its wide center makes it look a bit like an ample reclining woman or, perhaps, a pregnant woman. Thus, an explanation for Columbus's Spanish name for the island, Virgin Gorda, meaning "the fat virgin."

The southern end of the island is an arid parcel known as **The Valley**. Its western shore is famous for an area called **The Baths**, which is covered by huge granite boulders that form an intriguing network of seawater pools and cave-like passageways. **Devil's Bay**, another boulder-enclosed cove to the south, is linked to The Baths by a coastal trail.

Spanish Town is the main settlement and home to **Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbor**, which has dock space for 150 boats, a dive center, restaurants, a grocery store and various shops. A narrow strip of land connects this rather flat southern section to a broad, mountainous area in the middle of the island, which is topped by 1,500-foot **Gorda Peak**, the centerpiece of **Virgin Gorda National Park**.

A second narrow strip of land branches off the "fat" central section to form the **North Sound**, a water-lover's paradise and one of the world's most sheltered coves. Most of the resorts and restaurants scattered along the Sound are accessible only by boat.

> **AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *You may see "The Valley" and "Spanish Town" used interchangeably on maps, ferry schedules and brochures. In this book, The Valley refers to the entire southern portion of the island; Spanish Town refers to the settlement encompassing the dock and Yacht Harbour.*

A Brief History

Spaniards worked the copper mines on the rocky southeastern shore of Virgin Gorda during the 16th century. Dutch farmers settled on the island before the British took control in

1672. Spanish Town was the center of government and business for all of the BVI during the profitable plantation era, but population decreased rapidly after emancipation.

The island was virtually ignored for almost a hundred years, until wealthy American Laurance Rockefeller became enchanted with its natural beauty. He bought much of the land and built the exclusive Little Dix Bay Resort on the southwest coast in the 1960s. Later, Rockefeller donated most of his property back to the BVI for protection and development as parks and wildlife preserves.

Today, Virgin Gorda is an upscale tourist destination catering to yachtsmen, divers and nature lovers. Fewer than 3,000 people live full-time on the island, which covers approximately eight square miles. Much of the land is undeveloped and protected by the BVI National Park Trust.

Getting There

By Air

A short air strip east of Spanish Town receives small commuter aircraft, but most flights are charters, not regularly scheduled service.

Air St. Thomas offers daily flights from St. Thomas for about $75 round trip. Contact the airline for a schedule and reservations. ☎ 340-776-2722.

Air Sunshine flies daily from San Juan, St. Croix and St. Thomas. For information on prices, schedule and reservations, call ☎ 495-8900.

By Ferry

Most visitors arrive by boat from Tortola.

Speedy's Ferries (☎ 495-5240) and **Smith's Ferries** (☎ 495-4495) offer daily service between Road Town, Tortola and The Valley on Virgin Gorda. The trip takes about 35 minutes and tickets are $20 round trip. Speedy's also makes runs between St. Thomas and Virgin Gorda on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Tickets are $50 round-trip.

North Sound Express (☎ 495-2271) provides powerboat service between the dock on Beef Island, near the airport, to Leverick Bay and

The Bitter End Yacht Club on North Sound, Virgin Gorda. The 30-minute trip costs $40 round trip.

■ Getting Around

By Taxi

Taxis meet the ferries when they arrive at the dock near Spanish Town. Drivers will drop you off anywhere on the island or take you on a guided tour. If you want to eat or shop at Yacht Harbour, you can walk there along a path through a fenced, but public, field to the right of the dock.

Taxis are easy to find at Yacht Harbour and The Baths, but if you want to arrange for transportation or a tour, phone one of the following: **Mahogany Taxi**, ☎ 495-5469; **Andy's Taxi**, ☎ 495-5511 or 495-5505, e-mail fischers@candwbvi.net; **L & S Taxi Service**, ☎ 495-5297.

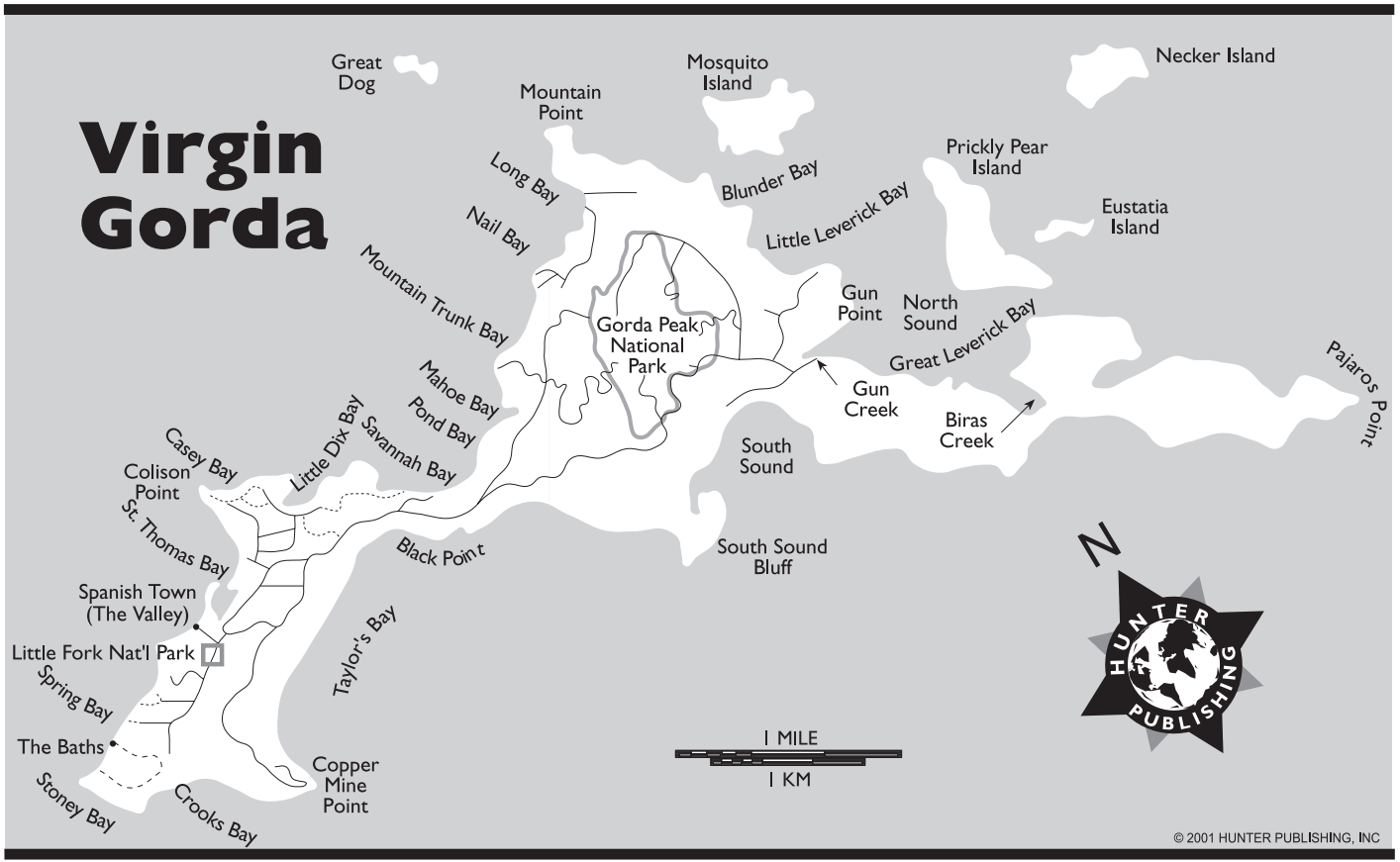
By Car

You'll enjoy Virgin Gorda more if you have a car for touring and exploring on your own. Expect to pay around $50 to $60 per day for a car or jeep, but you sometimes can get a better deal off-season.

RENTAL CAR AGENCIES	
Speedy's Car Rental	☎ 495-5240 or 495-5235; fax 495-5755
Andy's Car & Jeep Rental	☎ 495-5511 or 495-5505; e-mail fischers@candwbvi.net
L & S Jeep Rental	☎ 495-5297; fax 495-5342
Mahogany Car Rental	☎ 495-5469; fax 495-5072

■ Touring the Island

The Virgin Gorda Tours Association will pick you up at the ferry dock and take you on a tour of the island for about $20 per person. Make arrangements by calling Andy Flax (of Andy's Car and Jeep Rental and Andy's Taxi) at ☎ 495-5511 or 495-5505; e-mail fischers@candwbvi.net.


Virgin Gorda
Great Dog
Mountain Point
Mosquito Island
Necker Island
Prickly Pear Island
Eustatia Island
Long Bay
Nail Bay
Blunder Bay
Little Leverick Bay
Mountain Trunk Bay
Gorda Peak National Park
Gun Point
North Sound
Great Leverick Bay
Pajaros Point
Mahoe Bay
Pond Bay
Gun Creek
Biras Creek
Casey Bay
Little Dix Bay
Savannah Bay
Colison Point
St. Thomas Bay
South Sound
Black Point
South Sound Bluff
Spanish Town (The Valley)
Little Fork Nat'l Park
Taylor's Bay
Spring Bay
The Baths
Copper Mine Point
Stoney Bay
Crooks Bay
1 MILE
1 KM
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

Independent Driving Tour

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Pick up maps and brochures at the **BVI Tourist Board** office at Yacht Harbour in Spanish Town. ☎ 495-5181.*

Touring on your own is easy, since one main road runs from the southern tip of the island, over the central mountain, to Gun Creek and Leverick Bay on the North Sound. Most of the North Sound is not accessible by land, but you can get to Biras Creek and the Bitter End Yacht Club by ferry from Gun Creek.

The Baths, a majestic creation of nature, is an area on the southwestern shore filled with huge, precariously balanced boulders that form a maze of warm sea-water pools and interconnecting tunnels. This premier tourist attraction is about 15 minutes by car from the ferry dock. It is part of a 682-acre site protected by the BVI National Parks Trust that includes Devil's Bay, Spring Bay and the Copper Mine Point.

Take the main road south to the signed entrance to The Baths, park in the circular lot and follow the twisting path down to the beach. The walk takes less than 10 minutes; although the hike down isn't difficult, it becomes so when you're loaded down with beach gear and snorkeling equipment. Wear good shoes, watch for slick rocks and leave nonessentials locked in your car. The sometimes-rocky path winds through an arid patch of cactus and shrubs and ends in a shady palm thicket near the boulder-strewn white-sand beach.

Snorkeling is good along the reefs offshore, and it's great fun climbing around the towering weather-worn boulders.

> *If the surf is rough, as it can be in the winter, avoid the open water and wander through the boulders at the south end of the beach until you find a calm pool in a deserted grotto.*

Adventurous types will want to pick their way over the slippery boulders, through magnificent little caves, to **Devil's Bay**. A few unobtrusive ropes and wooden ladders have been placed at the most perilous points, but wear some type of shoe for traction.

Devil's Bay is less dramatic and less crowded than The Baths, and you'll find good snorkeling sites off the north end of the white-sand beach. If you don't want to tackle the coastal route over the boulders, you can hike to Devil's Bay on an inland path that begins in the parking circle. A trail map is posted in the gazebo-like shelter near Top of the Baths Restaurant. Allow about 15 minutes to make your way along the path to the beach. You'll hike through an arid area filled with lovely sage, frangipani, tamarind and cactus. Watch for ground lizards, small geckos and harmless little snakes.

HUNGRY?

If you're getting hungry, **Poor Man's Bar**, on the beach at The Baths, serves drinks, burgers and sandwiches daily, 9:30 am-6 pm.

Copper Mine Point is the site of a deserted mine that was first excavated by the Spanish more than 400 years ago. All that remains today are the ruins of a smokestack, boiler house and cistern used by Cornish miners who abandoned the area in 1867. The structures sit on a dramatic bluff that juts out above the Atlantic. Views from here are stunning, but the ruins are fragile and dangerous to climb.

Little Fort National Park, off the main road about a half-mile south of Yacht Harbour, is a 36-acre wildlife sanctuary. The remains of an old Spanish fort are hidden among vegetation and bounders in the park. You can cool off with a swim-and-snorkel break at a site just offshore known as the **Aquarium** or **Fischer's Rocks**. You'll see colorful fish along a shallow sponge-and-coral reef. This site also is a good beach dive, if you have your own equipment. Be careful about boat traffic; always use a floating flag to mark your presence.

Adventures on Water

Best Beaches

In addition to **The Baths** and **Devil's Bay**, a string of less-crowded beaches line the west coast south of the ferry dock near Spanish Town. All the beaches are reached most easily

by boat, but you can reach **Spring Bay** and **The Crawl** on a signed secondary road off the main road, less than two miles south of Spanish Town. Beautiful Spring Bay has a white-sand beach and The Crawl, a seawater pool formed by rocks, is fun for snorkeling.

Savannah Bay and **Pond Bay** are north of Spanish Town on the narrow strip of land that joins The Valley to the wide portion of the central island. Watch for a secondary road to Savannah Bay a short distance past Olde Yard Inn. The turn off for Pond Bay is marked by a sign for Mango Bay Resort. Both bays have beautiful sandy beaches that often are deserted.

Long Bay offers excellent snorkeling. It's located farther along the partly-unpaved secondary road that leads to Pond Bay. You'll drive about 15 minutes after you turn off the main road. Once you arrive, you'll find a long stretch of sand and calm water.

Leverick Bay is at the end of the main road and the last beach that can be reached by land on the North Sound. Pusser's Resort, Leverick Bay Watersports and Dive BVI are located here, and there's plenty of activity, especially on weekends.

Scuba Diving & Snorkeling

Dive boats based on Virgin Gorda often take passengers to the same dive sites in the Sir Frances Drake Channel that are popular with divers from Tortola. Additional favorites are located around the uninhabited Dog Islands off the northwest coast of Virgin Gorda. The islands are protected by the BVI National Parks Trust as nesting grounds for birds.

The Coral Gardens off the south end of Great Dog is a good dive for beginners. Coral, of course, is the star attraction here, and you may spot lobsters and fish such as snappers and spotted drums as you swim along the reef at depths of 10 to 60 feet. Stingrays and turtles are seen in sandy areas. Nearby, you may spot an airplane wreck in about 40 feet of water. It was deliberately sunk to form an artificial reef.

The Chimney is very popular with divers of all levels. It's at a depth of 15 to 45 feet in a gorgeous bay on the west side of Great Dog. Snorkeling is excellent along the shore and novice divers enjoy the Fish Bowl that's directly below the moorings. Various types of colorful fish

congregate here, waiting for handouts from divers. The Chimney, north of the Fish Bowl, is a wall covered in white sponges in a narrow opening between two large boulders.

Bronco Billy offers coral arches, canyons and boulders off the northwest coast of George Dog. Skilled snorkelers find interesting coral and fish near the shore.

Dive Operators

The two dive operators on Virgin Gorda offer two-tank dives for $80 to $90, one-tank dives for around $60. They also arrange night dives, snorkel trips and training courses. Bring your internationally accepted certification card if you want to rent equipment, get air fills or participate in guided tours designed for experienced divers. Introductory dives and resort courses are available if you're not certified.

Kilbrides Sunchaser Scuba is on the dock at the Bitter End Resort, but the custom-outfitted dive boats will rendezvous with private yachts or pick up divers anywhere in the North Sound area. They also make trips to Anegada. ☎ 800-932-4286 or 495-9638; fax 495-7549; www.come.to/bvi; e-mail sunscuba@surfbvi.com.

Dive BVI has locations at Yacht Harbor in Spanish Town and at Leverick Bay on the North Sound, as well as at Marina Cay off Beef Island. They are a PADI 5-star center with instruction at all levels. Custom-designed dive boats from both locations rendezvous with private yachts and the Leverick Bay boat picks up divers on North Sound. Weekly trips go to Anegada. ☎ 800-848-7078 or 495-5513; fax 495-5347; www.divebvi.com; e-mail info@divebvi.com.

Boating & Sailing

The Bitter End offers a variety of boating excursions. Call about snorkeling trips on the 40-foot *Ponce de Leon*, motorboat jaunts to Anegada on the 50-foot *Prince of Wales* and cocktail cruises around the North Sound. You can also rent sailboats, motorboats and dinghies. ☎ 494-2746.

Leverick Bay Watersports offers full-day trips to Anegada on a 33-foot cigarette boat. The center also rents Hobie cats, powerboats, Sunfish and kayaks. ☎ 495-7376.

Spirit of Anegada takes passengers on guided half- and full-day sightseeing and snorkeling tours to various islands, including Anegada. The traditional gaff-rigged schooner also is available for private charter. ☎ 495-5937 or 496-6825; e-mail spirit@surfbvi.com.

Spice Charters arranges sailing-snorkeling trips on a 51-foot sloop out of Leverick Bay. ☎ 495-7044 or 496-6633; fax 495-7043.

Euphoris Cruises and **Powerboat Rentals**, based at Yacht Harbour, offers rentals and water-taxi service on a variety of boats, including a captained 49-foot Albin Trawler, a 28-foot Bertram and 21- to 24-foot Makos and Robalos with awnings. ☎ 495-5542 or 494-5511; fax 494-3867; e-mail briapparl@aol.com.

Double D Charters has half- and full-day trips on a 48-foot sailboat or a 43-foot powerboat. Captain Dave's trips leave from Yacht Harbour and include beer, soft drinks and snorkeling equipment. ☎ 495-6150 or 499-2479; e-mail doublecharters@surfbvi.com.

Apache Charter has two 33-foot high-performance Apache powerboats that take passengers on full- and half-day trips. The boats also may be chartered. ☎ 495-7446 (phone/fax).

Mary Irene is a 49-foot sailboat based at Little Dix Bay. She is available for private charters and runs scheduled trips to the outer islands for snorkeling. ☎ 495-5555.

Watersports & Sportfishing

Bitter End Yacht Club (☎ 494-2746) and **Leverick Bay Watersports Center** (495-7376) offer all types of boats and equipment for virtually any watersport that's enjoyed in the North Sound area, including sportfishing.

The Nick Trotter Sailing School, at the Bitter End Yacht Club, teaches beginning and advance courses in sailing. ☎ 494-2745.

Adventures on Foot

Hiking

Gorda Peak is the highest point on the island at 1,500 feet. Its the centerpiece of the 265-acre **Virgin Gorda Peak National Park**. Two connecting hiking trails to the summit are maintained by the BVI National Park Trust. Both begin on the west side of the main road north of the narrow strip of land that connects The Valley to North Sound. Although the trails are rated moderate, you make a steep ascent on a rocky path and shoes with good tread are essential. Allow about 45 minutes to reach the peak, where you will find an observation deck that's elevated 30 feet above the ground to provide a panoramic view over the treetops. Bring along binoculars and a camera with a zoom lens.

Shopping

Spanish Town

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour in Spanish Town is the island's hub and has a small selection of stores surrounding an open-air atrium called **The Courtyard**. You'll find other shops and vendor stalls at the large resorts and in the parking circle at The Baths.

Located at Yacht Harbour Courtyard are the following:

Fill your picnic hamper or refrigerator with fresh produce and frozen foods from **Buck's Food Market**. They also carry a selection of beer, wine and liquor and the deli center prepares sandwiches and take-out meals. ☎ 495-5423; fax 495-7493.

The Wine Cellar and Bakery stocks a complete range of spirits and has its own bakery that turns out bread, cookies and pastries. Most days, the bakery staff prepares outstanding take-out sandwiches. ☎ 495-5250.

The Virgin Gorda Craft Shop displays the work of local artisans and features items such as jewelry, shell crafts and straw works. ☎ 495-5137.

Kaunda's Kysy Tropix is a camera and music store that sells and processes film and stocks a good selection of recorded local music. ☎ 494-6737.

Margo's Jewelry Boutique offers handcrafted gold and silver jewelry, sarongs and carved wood sculptures. ☎ 495-5237.

Thee Artistic Gallery specializes in luxurious 14k gold and sterling silver pieces, crystal, museum items, collectable coins, maps and gifts. ☎ 495-5104; fax 495-5761.

Island Drug Centre has a pharmacy and well-stocked shop selling cosmetics, paperback books, toys, film and greeting cards. ☎ 495-5449.

Across the parking lot at Yacht Harbor are:

The Commissary and Ship Store (aka **Spanish Town Café**) is a combination gift shop/deli/grocery. It's owned by Little Dix Resort and the chef *there* prepares sandwiches and salads for the deli *here*. You can eat inside in air-conditioned comfort or enjoy the harbor view from the outdoor tables. The shop also carries groceries, ice, some clothing and a few gift items. ☎ 495-5834.

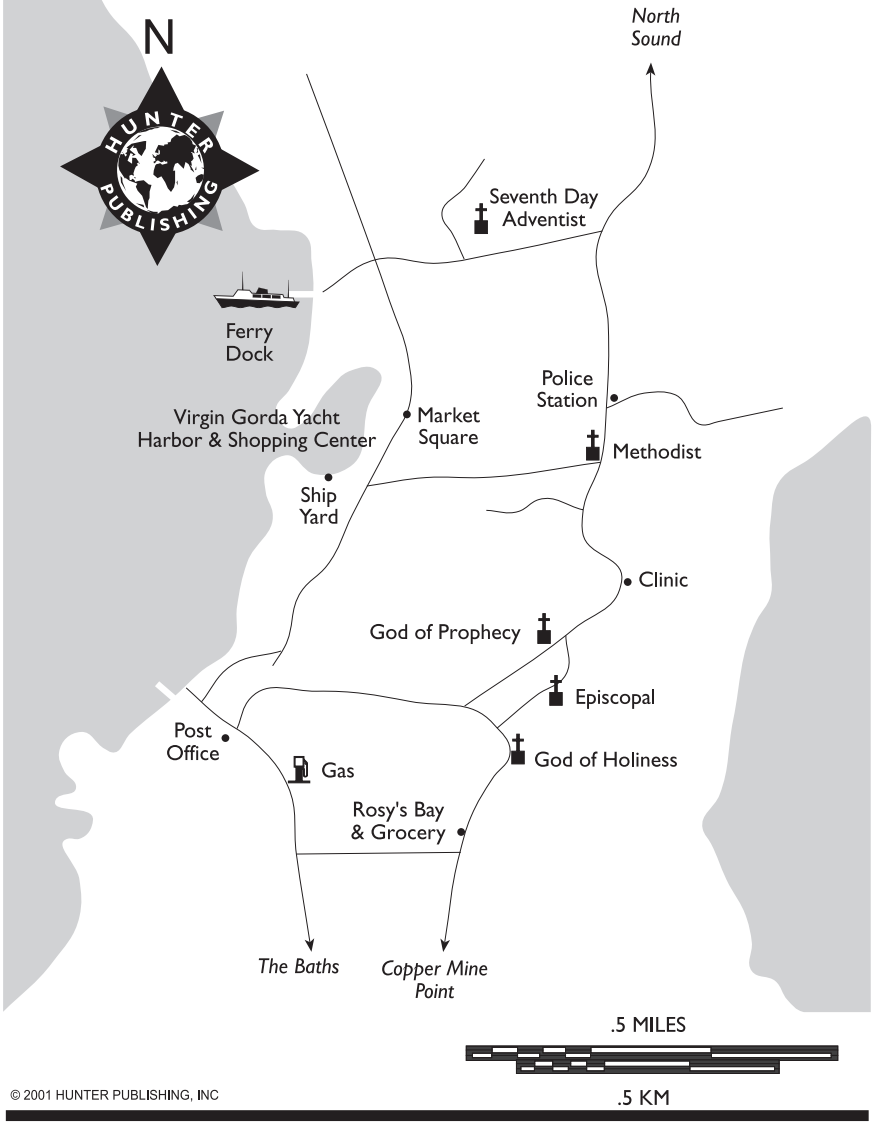
BVI Apparel Factory Outlet does custom embroidery work on polo shirts and T-shirts. ☎ 494-5511.

Flamboyance has additional shops in Road Town and Soper's Hole on Tortola. The stores carry a variety of duty-free luxury items such as watches, perfumes and leather goods. ☎ 495-5946 or 495-5947; e-mail flamboyance@surfbvi.com.

■ Where to Stay

Virgin Gorda caters to water-loving, eco-conscious, nature buffs who value peaceful, simple surroundings, basic comforts and individual attention above all else. There are few accommodations in the budget range, since the BVI is an upscale destination, but you can save on your overall vacation by renting a unit with cooking facilities.

Spanish Town & The Valley



© 2001 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

The accommodations listed below are recommended for location, value and comfort. During low-season, generally from April 15 through December 14, rates drop 25-50%. Expect to pay an additional 10% service charge and 7% tax year-round.

ACCOMMODATION PRICE CHART	
Use the following price scale as a rate guideline for a double room per night. All prices are given in US dollars.	
$	$75 or less
$$	$76-125
$$$	$126-200
$$$$	More than $200

Rental Agencies

If you want to rent a villa or private house, contact:

- **Priority Property Management** ☎ 495-5201; fax 495-5723; www.priorityproperty.com; e-mail priorityproperty@surfbvi.com.
- **Virgin Gorda Villas** ☎ 800-848-7081 or 495-7421; www.virgingordabvi.com; e-mail leverick@surfbvi.com.

NOTE: *The area code on Virgin Gorda is 284.*

In & Around The Valley

Little Dix Bay, West coast/The Valley, PO Box 70, Virgin Gorda, BVI. ☎ 800-928-3000 or 495-5555; fax 495-5661; www.rosewood-hotels.com; e-mail ldbhotel@caribsurf.com. 102 rooms and suites. $$$$.

Some say this resort built by Laurance Rockefeller and managed by the elite Rosewood Company is pretentious and overpriced. However, fans return here year after year for the understated elegance and peaceful atmosphere. Designed to be as one with nature, the resort emphasizes responsible use of resources and strives to function with minimal disturbance of the environment. But don't imagine a campground; this place is opulenct.

Recently renovated rooms are grouped two or four to a cottage and tucked among lush vegetation on a hillside above a dazzling bay. Each spacious air-conditioned unit has a private terrace overlooking the sea or landscaped grounds. Exotic furnishings, stone walls, oversized showers and walk-in closets are some of the features that make the rooms unique. The one-to-one ratio of staff to guests guarantees excellent attention.

There's no pool, which disappoints and surprises some guests, but the sea at magnificent Little Dix Bay is calm enough for swimming and floating aimlessly on an air mattress. Guests have complimentary use of watersports equipment and arrangements can be made for diving, waterskiing and sportfishing. Land-based facilities include seven all-weather tennis courts and a fitness center.

On-site dining is available at the Pavilion Restaurant, serving international cuisine; the Sugar Mill, serving grilled steaks and seafood in a casual setting; and The Beach Grill, which offers light meals at the water's edge.

Olde Yard Inn, Main Road/The Valley, PO Box 26, Virgin Gorda, BVI. ☎ 800-653-9273 or 495-5544; fax 495-5986; www.oldeyardinn.com; e-mail info@oldeyardinn.com. 14 rooms, 1 suite. $$$.

Renovated guest rooms at this friendly inn are decorated with original island art and outfitted with comfortable rattan furniture. Each unit opens onto a private patio and has an oversized walk-in shower and ceiling fan. Some are air-conditioned and equipped with small refrigerators and coffee makers. The best feature for many guests is the large, well-stocked library that calls them in from the sun to sprawl, uninterrupted, in a cozy chair with an icy drink and a stack of fascinating books. More active types enjoy lounging beside the large pool or working out in the fitness center.

The open-air Olde Yard Inn Restaurant ($$$-$$$$) draws locals and vacationers with an ever-changing French-inspired menu of fresh fish, Caribbean lobster, steaks, and gourmet daily specials. Local musicians play during dinner occasionally. The poolside Sip and Dip Grill ($-$$) serves excellent burgers, sandwiches and salads.

North Sound

Biras Creek, North Sound, PO Box 54, Virgin Gorda, BVI. ☎ 800-608-9661 or 494-3555; fax 494-3557; www.biras.com; e-mail biras@caribsurf.com. 34 suites. $$$$.

Elegant air-conditioned suites at Biras Creek are tucked into lush greenery and have sitting rooms, separate bedrooms, garden showers, mini-bars and private furnished patios – but no TV. The secluded resort is nestled between hills on a 140-acre peninsula that is inaccessible by land and surrounded on three sides by three different bodies of water. Guests arrive by boat. Walking/biking trails wind through the resort's "nature preserve" property crowned by a hilltop stone "castle" that serves as a lobby, library, TV room and meeting lounge.

All meals are included in the room rate, and the Pavilion restaurant serves up splendid views as well as extraordinary meals. Facilities include a freshwater swimming pool, two tennis courts, a watersports center and two private beaches. Biras Creek is a member of the distinguished Relais & Chateaux, an international group that accepts only the most exceptional country inns, hotels, resorts and restaurants.

The Bitter End Yacht Club, John O'Point/North Sound, PO Box 46, Virgin Gorda, BVI. ☎ 800-872-2392 or 495-7421; fax 495-7367; www.beyc.com; e-mail binfo@beyc.com. 90 suites and villas; 3 yachts. $$$$.

Guests arrive by private ferry from Beef Island, near the airport on Tortola, to begin a vacation devoted to watersports. Like summer camp, except with gourmet food, the resort's focus is go-go-go fun from dawn to well after dark. Located on a fabulous deep-water harbor, it features three beaches, a pool, hiking trails, daily outings and unlimited use of kayaks, windsurfers, sailboats and snorkeling gear.

Island-style villas and air-conditioned suites have private verandas with hammocks, refrigerators, ceiling fans, showers with views of the sea and large dressing areas. Meals are served in the Clubhouse Steak and Seafood Grille or the English Carvery, and live entertainment is presented several times each week.

A ferry shuttles back and forth between the dock at Gun Creek, across the street from the Last Stop Bar at the north end of the main road, and The Bitter End. The 10-minute ride is free and departs every hour on the hour from the resort, returning every hour on the half-hour from Gun Creek, daily 6 am-11 pm. Non-guests may go over for the day or simply for a meal.

Leverick Bay Resort, North Sound, PO Box 63, Virgin Gorda, BVI. ☎ 800-848-7081 (US), 800-463-9396 (Canada) or 495-7421; fax 495-7367; www.virgingordabvi.com; e-mail leverick@surfbvi.com. 16 rooms and 4 condos. $$$.

If you can't stretch the budget to fit one of the top-dollar, arrive-by-boat resorts, Leverick Bay is a good alternative. It's the last stop before the road ends at North Sound, and you can enjoy most of the bay's attractions from here. Modern, fashionable rooms decorated in pastel colors and island art have balconies that overlook the Sound. Villas, some with private pools, are individually designed with one or two bedrooms, living areas and full kitchens. They are scattered in the hills around Leverick Bay. Pusser's Restaurant sits poolside overlooking the marina and small beach where you may rent watersports equipment. Nearby facilities are geared toward guests and visiting yachtsmen and include Pusser's Company Store, Dive BVI, a self-serve laundry, Buck's market, a gift shop and a beauty spa.

Where to Eat

DINING PRICE CHART	
Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and tip. There's no tax on meals.	
$	$10 or less
$$	$11-20
$$$	$21-35
$$$$	More than $35

Spanish Town

Bath and Turtle, Yacht Harbour/Spanish Town, ☎ 495-5239. International. $$. Daily, 7 am-11 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Join the crowd for happy hour from 4-6 pm at the most popular pub on the island. Courtyard tables are full most of the day and night because of the dependably good and reasonably priced pizzas and burgers. At dinner, the menu includes grilled steaks and fish, lobster, pasta and seafood specialties.

The Baths

Top of the Baths, The Baths, ☎ 495-5497. International. $$. Daily, 8 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted.

Located in the parking area at the island's most popular attraction, this casual restaurant has indoor and outdoor seating, a freshwater swimming pool for customers and fabulous views of the beach and Sir Francis Drake Channel. Burgers and sandwiches are top sellers during most of the day, and Caribbean lobster, grilled fish and filet mignon are on the dinner menu. Many visitors to The Baths enjoy a drink on the patio near the pool after a day on the beach and boulders.

Mad Dog's, The Baths, ☎ 495-5830. Light meals and snacks. $. Daily, 10 am-7 pm. Credit cards accepted.

With a name like this, no further explanation is necessary. Find this popular bar on the main road just before The Baths. Burgers and sandwiches are available, but most people stop in for the piña coladas.

The Valley

Chez Bamboo, Main Road/The Valley, ☎ 495-5752. French/Creole. $$-$$$. Daily, 3 pm-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended.

Look for the colorful latticework on this classy indoor/outdoor restaurant just north of Yacht Harbor. The specialty here is Carib/Creole food with a French twist. Try the bouillabaisse, Louisiana penne or snapper "papillote." Be sure to save room for homemade dessert. During high season, live jazz is played for Prime Rib Night on Saturdays and Caribbean Cuisine Night on Mondays.

Fischer's Cove Restaurant, Main Road/The Valley, ☎ 495-5252 or 495-5253; fax 495-5820. Caribbean/International. $$-$$$. Daily, 8 am-10 pm; Sunday brunch, 11:30 am. Credit cards accepted.

The ocean view is wonderful from this casual open-air restaurant at Fisher's Cove Beach Hotel. Fresh grouper in mustard sauce and mango chicken top the menu, but everything tastes especially delicious in this lovely veranda setting.

The Rock Cafe & Sports Bar, Main Road/The Valley, ☎ 495-5482; fax 495-5674. International/Caribbean. $$$. Daily, 4 pm-midnight. Credit cards accepted. Reservations accepted.

Plan to sit on the gorgeous back deck surrounded by dramatic boulders at this trendy restaurant located just south of Spanish Town. The varied menu features such items as pasta, lobster baked in basil sauce and Mexican specialties. Caribbean bands perform most nights, and you can sample top-brand tequilas and margaritas in the upstairs bar.

Giorgio's Table, Mahoe Bay/The Valley, ☎ 495-5367. Italian. $$$-$$$$. Daily, 9 am-10 pm. Credit cards accepted. Reservations recommended for dinner.

This charming restaurant overlooks the Sir Francis Drake Channel from Katitche Point, which separates Pond Bay from Tetor Bay in an area known simply as Mahoe Bay. Get there by taking the secondary road toward the west (left coming from Spanish Town) off the main road. The menu ranges from pizza to veal scaloppine and represents all the regions of Italy. Homemade bread, pasta, sauces and desserts are enhanced by a selection of fine wines.

Mineshaft Café and Pub, Coppermine Road/The Valley, ☎ 495-5260; e-mail mineshaft@caribsurf.com. International. $-$$. Daily, 10 am-late. Credit cards accepted.

Don't miss this entertaining café/bar/golf course run by the Sprauve family. Golf is played on a nine-hole mini-course set among boulders. Great fun for families and groups of friends. The views are fantastic, especially at sunset, when you'll want to meander over to the pub that's built like a mine shaft. A bucket hanging from a pulley on the center ceiling beam is filled with the makings of the bar's signature drink, The Cave In. You can win one free by making a hole-in-one on the golf course. Burgers, sandwiches and other light fare is featured on the café menu.

North Sound

Recommended dining on North Sound is limited to **Pusser's Leverick Bay** (☎ 495-7370), where you can get burgers and sandwiches all day at the lower-level café or grilled fish and English specialties in the evening at the upper-level restaurant. You may also catch the ferry at Gun Creek for a ride over to **The Bitter End** (see *Where to Stay*) or call **Biras Creek** (see *Where to Stay*) to request a boat ride from Gun Creek.

■ Nightlife

After a full day in the sun, most visitors turn in early, but the island has much to offer after dark, especially during high season. Check out the *What's Happenin'* section of ***Limin' Times*** (☎ 494-2413; www.bviwelcome.com) and the *Entertainment* page in ***Welcome*** (☎ 494-2413; www.bviwelcome.com) for current events and scheduled entertainment. Both publications are widely available free of charge at tourist-oriented businesses.

Live Music

On weekends nearest the full moon, visitors join locals at **The Mineshaft Café** for an especially jovial celebration, similar to Bomba's Full Moon Party, on Tortola. Throughout the month, the popular restaurant-bar features local bands during Fridays' Ladies Night. Be sure to try the signature drink called The Cave In. The Mineshaft

Café and Pub is on Coppermine Road in The Valley, ☎ 495-5260. (For additional information, see *Where to Eat.*)

Elsewhere in The Valley, **Rock Café and Sports Bar** hosts live bands and special menus on Fridays and Sundays. It's on the main road and open until midnight all week, ☎ 495-5482. The **Bath and Turtle**, at Yacht Harbour in Spanish Town, has a live band during its all-you-can-eat buffet on Wednesdays, ☎ 495-5239. **Chez Bamboo**, on the main road, offers a variety of live music during the week. Stop by Fridays for jazz, Saturdays for Caribbean sounds, and Sundays for the music of Morris Mark and his band, Experience. Call for times and additional information, ☎ 495-5752. Eldon John plays calypso guitar Fridays and Mondays at 6:30pm at **Olde Yard Inn**, located on the main road, ☎ 495-5544.

Little Dix Bay, on the west coast, often features live entertainment during the high tourist season. Call for information, ☎ 495-5555. On North Sound, **Pusser's** at Leverick Bay has music by local bands on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The terrace is a popular spot for sunset drinks every night of the week, ☎ 495-7370.

Island Facts & Numbers

AIRPORT: Visitors arriving by air land at Beef Island International Airport, ☎ 494-3701 or 495-2525.

AREA CODE: The area code for all British Virgin Islands is 284. You may dial direct from the States.

BANK: Barclays Bank, Yacht Harbour, Virgin Gorda. ☎ 495-5271.

DRIVING: Traffic stays to the left. The speed limit is 20 mph in towns and 35 mph in the countryside.

ELECTRICITY: 110 volts, 60 cycles, as on the US mainland.

EMERGENCIES: Ambulance, ☎ 999; Fire Department, ☎ 999; Police, ☎ 999; Virgin Island Search and Rescue, ☎ 494-4357; Hospital, ☎ 494-3497; Hyperbaric chamber for divers (St. Thomas), ☎ 340-776-2686.

POST OFFICE: Spanish Town, ☎ 495-5234.

TAXES: There is no sales tax in the BVI. A 7% government tax is added to all hotel bills.

TOURIST INFORMATION: British Virgin Island Tourist Board, Yacht Harbor, Spanish Town, ☎ 495-5182.

WEBSITES: www.bviwelcome.com; www.b-v-i.com; www.britishvirgin- islands.com; www.bviports.org (for ferry schedules and other access information).

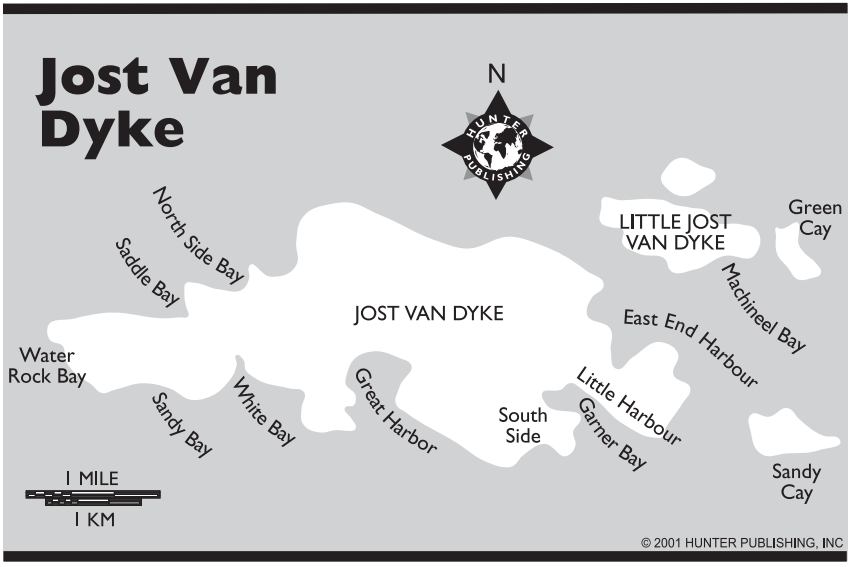
WEDDINGS: Apply for a marriage license at the Registrar's Office, Main Street, Road Town, ☎ 494-3701. (See *Island Facts & Numbers* in the Tortola section for additional BVI information.)

Jost Van Dyke

Overview

Little four-mile-long Jost is a sparsely populated barefoot wonderland off the northwest tip of Tortola. The *When* (☎ 494-2997), a supply ferry accepts passengers on the half-hour ride between West End, Tortola and Great Harbor, Jost Van Dyke. Tickets are $10 one way. Call for the schedule and show up early, because the ferry is know to leave *when* it wants to.

Legend claims the hilly, unspoiled island is named after a Dutch pirate, but it is better known as the 18th-century birthplace of Dr. John Lettsome, founder of the London Medical Society and the Royal Humane Society. It was also the home of English Quaker colonist William Thornton, who won an international competition that allowed him to design the United States Capitol.



What to Do

Once you arrive in **Great Harbor**, the only settlement, grab a land or water taxi and head for **White Bay** on the southwest end of the island. Three friendly locals – George, Bun and Gregory – are usually at the dock when the ferry arrives. **George's Taxi** (☎ 495-9253) and **Bun's Taxi** (☎ 495-9281) charge $5 to $7 per person for a car ride to White Bay. **Gregory's Brat Water Taxi** and **Bun's Tequila Sea Taxi** charge about the same for a ride over in a motor boat.

You can hike to White Bay in 20 or 30 minutes, but it's a long trek if you're carrying snorkeling equipment and beach gear. However, if you want to try **hiking to White Bay**, turn left onto the main road in front of the white Customs Building when you walk off the ferry dock.

Continue on this partially-paved road, which has little traffic due to the fact that fewer than 200 people live on the island and fewer than that have cars. You'll go through the little settlement of Great Harbour and up a fairly steep hill. Watch for a sign pointing to a path leading to **White Bay Campground** (see below). It will be the second left. Take it down the hill to the **Local Flavor Bar** (see below) at the campground, where you can stop for a drink. Then continue along the coast, over a rocky outcropping, to the white-sand beach in front of **Soggy Dollar Bar**.

You also can walk along the road all the way to White Bay. It's not as scenic as the coastal path and you must walk uphill for a few extra minutes before you head down to the bay. But this road may be quicker and easier than the trail, especially if you're carrying a heavy load or wearing sandals.

Snorkeling is good at White Bay, especially around **Pull and be Damn' Point** at the campground. Notice where the pelicans are diving, then snorkel out to their feeding ground to watch the fish. Another area with abundant fish is around the rocks at **Changes Point** on the

west end of the bay (on your right as you face the water with your back to Soggy Dollar).

NOTE: *The area code for Jost Van Dyke is 284.*

■ Where to Stay & Eat

White Bay

White Bay Sandcastle ($$$) and **Soggy Dollar Bar** ($$$), White Bay, ☎ 495-9888; fax 495-9999; www.sandcastle-bvi.com; e-mail relax@sandcastle-bvi.com. 6 rooms. $$$.

This is a fantastic casual inn and beach bar. A well-known rum drink, the Painkiller, was born here, and the story of its creation is posted beside the bar. There's no dock at White Bay; the bar was named for customers who wade or swim ashore from chartered yachts and arrive with wet money in their pockets.

The property is owned and operated by Americans Debby Pearse and Bruce Donath. All six cottages are within 25 yards of the water and feature king-sized beds, ceiling fans and private bathrooms. Four *rondel* cottages have a daybed to accommodate a third person and a garden shower outside the bathroom with hot water heated by the sun in rooftop tanks. Two recently completed units have indoor showers and air conditioning. Telephones, radios and TVs are conspicuously missing from the rooms, and guests are asked to refrain from using any type of noise-generating appliance.

Soggy Dollar serves lunch on the beach every day with selections ranging from burgers to chicken rotis to flying fish sandwiches. The upper-level restaurant at Sandcastle serves a four-course fixed-price dinner by candlelight. You must make a reservation before 4 pm so the kitchen can prepare enough meals. Credit cards are accepted.

White Bay Campground and **Local Flavor Beach Bar**, White Bay. $. ☎ 495-9312.

Find this popular campground on the beach just east of Sandcastle. Ivan Chinnery is the friendly and talented islander who owns the campground and occasionally sings and plays guitar at night spots in Great Harbour. He has basic cabins and prepared campsites with electricity.

Local Flavor Beach Bar is known as the "Stress-Free Bar" and operates on an honor system if Ivan isn't around. A small kitchen is available for campers. Ivan will take you on terrific hikes around *his* island.

Great Harbour

If you want more excitement than laid-back White Bay can offer, go into Great Harbour. It has an international reputation as a beach-party town, largely due to Foxy Callwood at **Foxy's Tamarind Bar**, a casual restaurant and happenin' pub.

Foxy's Tamarind Bar, Great Harbour, ☎ 495-9258. Credit cards are accepted. Reservations are expected before 5 pm.

Foxy plays guitar and sings, sometimes made-up-on-the-spot jingles about patrons. His T-shirts are seen around the world; buy one at **The Fox Hole** (☎ 495-9275) next to the open-air restaurant/bar.

Foxy's is closed annually from late August through September, but open for lunch Monday-Friday the rest of the year. However, call for hours before you make the trip over, especially during low season. Dinner is served nightly. The menu features barbecue, rotis, burgers, steaks and local lobster.

Several times each year, Foxy throws big events that end in a wild all-night party. These celebrations draw visitors from every island in the Caribbean and most countries around the world. The Halloween Cat Fight is a catamaran race that ends with a Halloween Party. He also hosts a Wooden Boat Regatta in May, but his New Year's Eve bash is the most popular event of the year.

Little Harbour

Little Harbour, on the east end, is popular with charter boats because of the good anchorage and three casual waterfront restaurants it offers. The shore is rocky, so there's virtually no beach. However, hikers may want to take a land or water taxi over and trek up the mountain trail. It's a rough 1,000-foot ascent, but the views are stunning.

If you don't see a water taxi at the dock or a land taxi around the Customs Building, ask at a shop called **Coco Locos**, west of the ferry dock. Lorrin, a talented artisan who designs jewelry and clothes, is married to Gregory, of Gregory's Brat Water Taxi. She will contact him for you. Expect to pay $5-$7 per person for a ride to Little Harbour.

Water taxi service to Tortola is about $10 per person, the same as the ferry, but you can be picked up and dropped off someplace other than the ferry docks.

Restaurants at Little Harbour include: **Sidney's Peace & Love** ($-$$, ☎ 495-9271), open at 9 am and serving all meals all day with live entertainment on Monday and Saturday nights; **Harris' Place** ($-$$, ☎ 495-9302), famous for the Monday night Lobstermania, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily; and **Abe's By the Sea** ($$, no phone, but you can reach him on VHF Channel 16), holds a pig roast on Wednesday nights and serves lunch and dinner daily. You may pick up ice and a few picnic items at Harris' or Abe's.

Anegada

Overview

Anegada is unlike any of the other British Virgin Islands. It sits alone, about 14 miles north of Virgin Gorda and 30 miles northeast of Tortola, sheltered by one of the world's largest coral reefs, 18-mile-long **Horseshoe Reef**. While the other Virgins are made of volcanic mountains, Anegada is a narrow, flat, coral atoll measuring about 12 miles from **East Point** to **West End Point**.

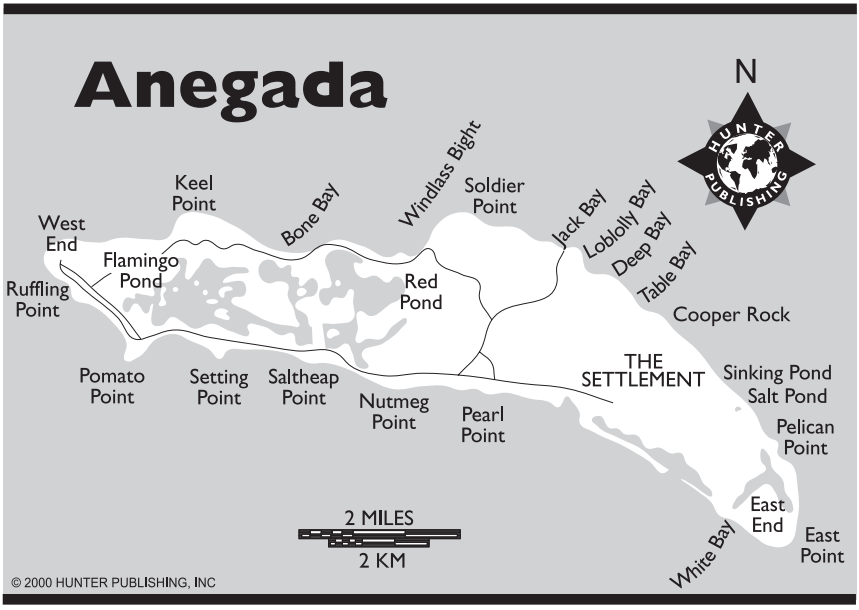
The highest spot on the island is just 28 feet above sea level. Spanish explorers called it Anegada, or drowned land, because storms easily cause ocean waves to engulf the beach. Over the past centuries, many sailors, unable to see the level island on the horizon, have crashed against Horseshoe Reef and sunk offshore. Their wrecked ships lie on the ocean floor attracting shoals of sea creatures and providing excellent adventures for snorkelers and scuba divers.

CHARTER BOAT RESTRICTIONS

Charter companies don't allow their boats to be taken to Anegada. The reef is hard to see unless the sun is directly overhead, and approaches to the two anchorages are tricky, even for skilled captains with local knowledge.

Archeologists have uncovered evidence of Indian villages on Anegada well before Columbus sailed past in 1493. Later, pirates took advantage of the protective reefs to hid themselves and their treasures. The first European settlers came to Anegada to hunt for pirate treasure and pillage galleons that wrecked coming through the Anegada Passage.

Friendly fishermen and their families now inhabit the island and the British Virgin Island National Park Trust protects much of it as a bird and wildlife sanctuary. Creatures living on preserved land include flamingos, herons, ospreys, terns, wild donkeys and feral goats. Spectacular coral-sand beaches line the coast, especially on the north and west shores. With fewer than 200 permanent inhabitants, you can always find a secluded stretch of sand with no footprints.



Getting There

Clair Aero Services offers flights to the airport near **The Settlement** on Anegada's south coast. The trip takes about 15 minutes from Beef Island. Round-trip tickets cost $59 and flights leave regularly on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. It's possible to fly from St. Thomas to Beef Island in time to connect with afternoon flights to Anegada. Round-trip tickets cost about $136 per person and planes leave on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Call the airline for information and reservations. ☎ 495-2271.

Fly BVI offers a day-trip package for two for $110 from Beef Island and $160 from Virgin Gorda, which includes an island tour and lunch. ☎ 800-IFLY-BVI or 495-1747.

Most visitors arrive by boat from Tortola or Virgin Gorda.

The Bitter End offers motorboat jaunts to Anegada on the 50-foot *Prince of Wales*, ☎ 494-2746. **Leverick Bay Watersports** offers full-day trips to Anegada on a 33-foot cigarette boat, ☎ 495-7376.

The ***Spirit of Anegada*** takes passengers on guided half- and full-day sightseeing and snorkeling tours to various islands, including Anegada

on a traditional gaff-rigged schooner. ☎ 495-5937 or 496-6825; e-mail spirit@surfbvi.com.

Double D Charters has full-day trips on a 43-foot powerboat. Captain Dave's trips leave from Yacht Harbour and include beer, soft drinks and snorkeling equipment. ☎ 495-6150 or 499-2479; e-mail doublecharters@surfbvi.com.

Apache Charter has two 33-foot high-performance Apache powerboats that take passengers on day trips. ☎ 495-7446 (phone/fax).

Getting Around

Call **Anegada Taxi** (☎ 495-0228) for a ride anywhere on the island. If you want to rent a jeep or car, call: **D. W. Jeep Rentals**, ☎ 495-8018 or 495-9677; **ABC Car Rentals**, ☎ 495-9466; **The Anegada Reef Hotel**, ☎ 495-8002.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *The Anegada Reef Hotel runs shuttle-bus service to the northern beaches for $6 per person.*

Adventures on Water

Visitors must bring their own equipment or sign on with an outfitter that offers day trips to Anegada, because there are no full-service dive shops on the island. Snorkelers and divers usually can count on calm seas with excellent visibility, although the Atlantic can be rough during the winter months.

Horseshoe Reef extends into the Atlantic off the north coast and much of the coral is beaten to stubs by pounding surf every winter. However, if you know where to look, you will find superb elkhorn coral and interesting shipwrecks. Check with Lowell Wheatley at the Anegada Reef Hotel about air fills and tank rentals, ☎ 495-8002; fax 495-9362.

Sue's Sea Tours is run by Sue Wheatley, a charming English woman who knows the island well. She and her husband, Lowell, run the Anegada Reef Hotel, but Sue enjoys showing visitors the island's natural wonders through sea kayaking tours. Contact her at the hotel to make arrangements. ☎ 495-8002.

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Both Neptune's Treasure and the Anegada Reef Hotel rent various watersports equipment. See contact information below.*

Where to Stay

The Anegada Reef Hotel, Setting Point/South Shore, ☎ 495-8002; fax 495-9362; e-mail info@anegadareef.com. 20 rooms. $$$ (all meals included).

This informal hotel owned by Lowell and Sue Wheatley offers simple rooms furnished with rattan and decorated in bright island colors. Each air-conditioned unit has a ceiling fan, private tiled bath and coffee maker, but no TV or phone. Although the hotel accommodates only a few guests, passengers from boats at the nearby marina increase the number for dinner each night. Lowell cooks fresh swordfish, lobsters and chicken on grills made from 55-gallon barrels and guests dine at tables by the water's edge. Often, there is music for dancing under the stars. Since all meals are included in the price of a double room, the hotel package is very reasonable.

The Anegada Reef Hotel also rents two villas on the island. One has four bedrooms, the other has one bedroom.

Neptune's Treasure, South Shore, ☎ 495-9439. 4 rooms, $; tents/campsites, $.

"Simplicity" is the keyword at this guesthouse and campground run by the Soares family. The rooms are so close to the beach that you are lulled to sleep by the gentle sound of the surf. The clean, modern units are basic but comfortable, and each has a private bath. Camping facilities include comfortable high-density mattresses, linens and nearby showers. The Neptune compound includes a restaurant that serves a complimentary continental breakfast to overnight guests.

Anegada Beach Cottages and Campground, Pomato Point, ☎ 495-9466.

If you want to really get away from the world, pitch a tent at this laid-back spot where bare sites rent for $7 per night. The simple cottages are about $35.

Ocean Range Hotel, The Settlement, ☎ 495-9522 or 495-2019. 6 rooms. $$.

Visitors who prefer to be near the main village should check into one of the six basic and inexpensive units at this hotel overlooking the inland reef. All rooms are air conditioned, modern and decorated in bright tropical colors. Each is outfitted with a queen-size bed, TV, private bathroom, private balcony and a kitchenette.

Mac's Place Camping, Loblolly Bay, ☎ 495-8020.

Campsites sit on a bluff overlooking the bay at this upscale and popular campground. Large tents rent for $35 per night and tent platforms also are available. Mac is an island native who enjoys sharing local knowledge with visitors.

Where to Eat

Anegada Reef Hotel, Setting Point/South Shore, ☎ 495-8002; fax 495-9362. Outdoor cookout. $$$. Dinner daily starting at 7:30 pm. Reservations for dinner required before 4 pm.

Lowell Wheatley mans the grills for his famous nightly cookout featuring generous portions of fresh fish, chicken, baby back ribs, steaks and lobster. His secret cooking sauce is outstanding; guests try without luck to coax him into revealing the recipe. Side dishes include fresh vegetables. All meals are included in room rates for guests of the hotel, but non-guests are welcome with reservations. The day starts with a full English breakfast. Lunch centers around burgers, sandwiches and lobster salad.

Big Bamboo, Loblolly Bay/North Shore, ☎ 495-2019. Lunch only. $-$$.

Stop for lunch at this colorful pavilion set among the seagrapes on the beautiful beach at Loblolly Bay. The specialty is lobster served with veggies, but other seafood and sandwiches are available. Bamboo is also a popular beach bar known for rum drinks and icy beer.

Flash of Beauty, Loblolly Bay/North Shore, ☎ 495-8014. West Indian. $-$$. Daily, 10 am-9 pm.

Located at the east end of the bay on a beach with the same name, this casual beach bar is sometimes open only for lunch. The menu centers around sandwiches, but you can also order Anegada lobster and a couple of other seafood dishes.

Dotsy's Bakery and Dinette, The Settlement, ☎ 495-9667. West Indian. $-$$. Daily, 9 am-7 pm. Just down the street from the town square, this delicious-smelling café turns out bread, pastries and cakes. They also make sandwiches using fresh-baked bread.

Cow Wreck Beach Bar and Grill, Cow Wreck Bay/North Shore, ☎ 495-9461. West Indian. $$. Lunch and dinner, 11 am-9 pm.

This cozy family-run beach bar offers a shady retreat, cold rum drinks and great meals. Fritters made from fresh-caught conch are outstanding; many patrons come for the grilled lobster dinners. Cool off in the afternoon with the specialty drink, Wreck Punch.

Pam's Kitchen, South Shore, ☎ 495-8031. Bakery. $.

You can start your day with fresh-baked goodies and hot coffee at Pam's, which is part bakery and part condiment shop. In addition to great breads, muffins, pies and pizzas, Pam prepares jams, chutneys, salsas and hot sauces that are made with 100% natural ingredients.

Neptune's Treasure Restaurant and Bar, South Shore, ☎ 495-9439. West Indian. $$.

The Soares family can guarantee they serve the freshest seafood – they catch it themselves. Try the swordfish, conch or spiny lobster, which also is cooked by family members. Everything is delicious. Add to your dining experience with one of the creative bar drinks. The piña coladas are said to be the best on the island.

Single-Resort Islands

Marina Cay

Marina Cay is a tiny six-acre chunk of land tucked between Great Camanoe and Scrub Island a mile off the north shore of Beef Island. A free ferry shuttles passengers the short distance from the dock at Conch Shell Point on **Trellis Bay**, out to Marina Cay at 10:30 am, 11:30 am and 12:30 pm, then on the hour 3 pm-7 pm.

Once out there, you can snorkel, dive, kayak, swim and relax on the white-sand beach. **Dive BVI** has a small scuba and watersports center on the island, and arranges one- and two-tank boat dives on a flexible schedule. On Fridays, their motor-powered catamaran, **M/V *SeaLion,*** leaves Marina Cay at 9:15 am for a day trip to Anegada. Contact instructor and manager Steve O'Day for information and reservations. ☎ 495-9363.

Diamond Reef

Diamond Reef is located between Marina Cay and the southeast side of Great Camanoe, a private island that is off-limits to visitors. Novice divers and snorkelers of all levels enjoy exploring the reef, which lies in 10 to 35 feet of crystal-clear water. It's too far from shore to be a beach dive, so check with Dive BVI if you want to go out by boat.

American author Robb White and his wife, Rodie, lived on the island in the 1930s and their house is still standing and open for visitors. White's book, *Our Virgin Island,* was a 1953 best seller that became a movie starring Sidney Poitier and John Cassavettes. Much of the movie, which is about life on Marina Cay, was shot on the island.

Pusser's owns the hotel, restaurant and shop on the island, so when you tire of watersports, you can browse through the **Company Store**, enjoy a Painkiller made with Pusser's rum, and dine in the open-air pavilion that overlooks Sir Frances Drake Channel.

Four rooms and two two-bedroom villas can accommodate up to 16 overnight guests. They are perched on a bluff overlooking the sea and each is furnished with king-size beds and ceiling fans. Villas have a sitting room and an oceanview terrace. Rates, including continental

breakfast, run $150 for a double room and $350 for a villa in high season.

One number will connect you to the inn, restaurant and store. ☎ 494-2174; fax 494-4775; e-mail marinacy@caribsurf.com.

Saba Rock

You reach this tiny speck of land by **North Sound Water Taxi** (☎ 495-9966) from any dock on the North Sound. Just call for a ride. When you arrive on single-resort Saba Rock, you'll find a brand new property on a nearly-deserted island surrounded by **Eustatia Reef**, a snorkelers' paradise.

You may ferry over for the day or stay overnight at the resort. While you hide out there, enjoy sailing, windsurfing, diving, fishing and total relaxation.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Don't confuse Saba Rock with Saba Island, a five-square-mile Dutch isle southwest of St. Barts.*

Saba Rock Restaurant is a string of A-frame pavilions overlooking North Sound and the Bitter End Yacht Club. Ceiling fans draw cool sea breezes into the attractive exposed-beam restaurant that features sandwiches and salads at lunch and a $25 all-you-can-eat international buffet for dinner. Buffet selections change, but meat choices always include leg of lamb and prime rib at the carving station, as well as baby back ribs. On Sundays, a West Indian buffet, priced at $20, features johnnycakes, curry, jerk chicken and fresh fish. Live entertainment is provided by a local steel band.

The small resort is super-friendly. Kim, the bartender, whips up extravagantly delicious drinks. Head chef Shelford Tucker, who won a gold medal at the Taste of Caribbean Culinary Olympics for his famous chocolate mousse, works the carving station during the buffets.

Overnight accommodations are in eight rooms ($$$) and suites ($$$$), and rates include continental breakfast. The hotel-type rooms are attractively furnished with one or two double beds. The two-bedroom suites have a king-size bed in one room, two twin-size beds in the other, a full kitchen, living room, dining room and a wrap-around porch.

For information and reservations contact the resort at ☎ 495-7711; fax 495-7373; www.sabarock.com; e-mail sabarock@caribsurf.com.

Cooper Island

Cooper Island Beach Club, Manchioneel Bay/Cooper Island, ☎ 800-542-4624 or 494-2749 or 494-3721; e-mail info@cooper-island.com. 12 rooms $$$.

Catch the ferry at Prospect Reef Resort Marina (☎ 494-3311) and spend the day at this typical, laid-back beach resort. Ferry service is variable, so call the resort or marina for a schedule. The fare is complimentary for hotel guests and $10 per person each way for day visitors.

Rooms here are open and breezy with kitchenettes and a living area. Water comes from cisterns full of rainwater, electricity is generated by solar units and cooking is done over outdoor grills or gas-powered stoves.

The Beach Club Restaurant is popular with boaters, divers and hotel guests. Menu options include fresh fish, conch fritters, pasta dishes and West Indian curries. At lunch, most beachgoers enjoy cold drinks, burgers and fish sandwiches.

Underwater Safaris (☎ 800-537-7032 or 494-3235; fax 494-5322) has a dive shop and scuba operation on Cooper Island Beach. Dive packages are set up with the hotel, but non-guests also may rent equipment and arrange dive trips.

Cistern Point, on the south end of Manchioneel Bay, is a superb diving and snorkeling site. The area is sheltered and usually enjoys calm waters with great visibility. Borrow or rent a dinghy from The Beach Club or walk along the beach to the point. The best fish and formations are around the south side of the point.

Boat dives from Cooper include **Alice In Wonderland**, a 40- to 80-foot dive off nearby Ginger Island, that gets its name from the larger-than-man mushroom-shaped coral heads. Some of the healthiest corals in the BVI are found at this popular site.

Peter Island

Peter Island Resort, across Sir Francis Drake Channel from Road Town on Tortola, is owned by the Amway Corporation. It recently has undergone a $20 million renovation and the 52 rooms and cottages are now magnificent. All units are air conditioned and have a private bath and a private balcony or patio. Luxuri-

ous extras include plush terry robes, a mini-bar, hair dryer and private safe.

Beachfront suites are carved into a bluff over Deadman's Bay and feature sitting areas, oversized bathtubs, king-sized beds and walk-in closets. Large ocean- and garden-view rooms near the lobby overlook Sprat Bay Yacht Harbor on one side and a garden swimming pool on the other.

The resort's **Deadman's Beach Bar and Grill** is a peaceful spot for a lunch of coconut shrimp or lobster salad. The more formal dining option is **Tradewinds Restaurant**, which requires resort-style dress for dinner (collared shirts and long pants for men, with women dressing to match). The five-course dinner here features fresh seafood, steaks, fine wines and all the trimmings. Live music is played for dancing most evenings. Meals are included in the room rates for overnight guests, but non-guests may ferry over to spend the day and have lunch and/or dinner ($$$$). The ferry leaves from the resort's dock on Baughers Bay on the east side of Road Bay; the $14 fare is waived if you have dinner reservations.

Contact Peter Island Resort for rate information and reservations, ☎ 800-346-4451 or 495-2000; fax 495-2500; www.peterisland.com.